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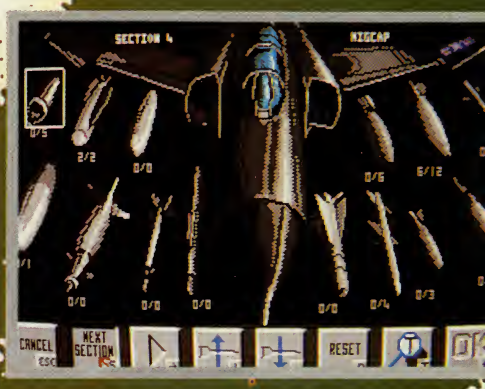

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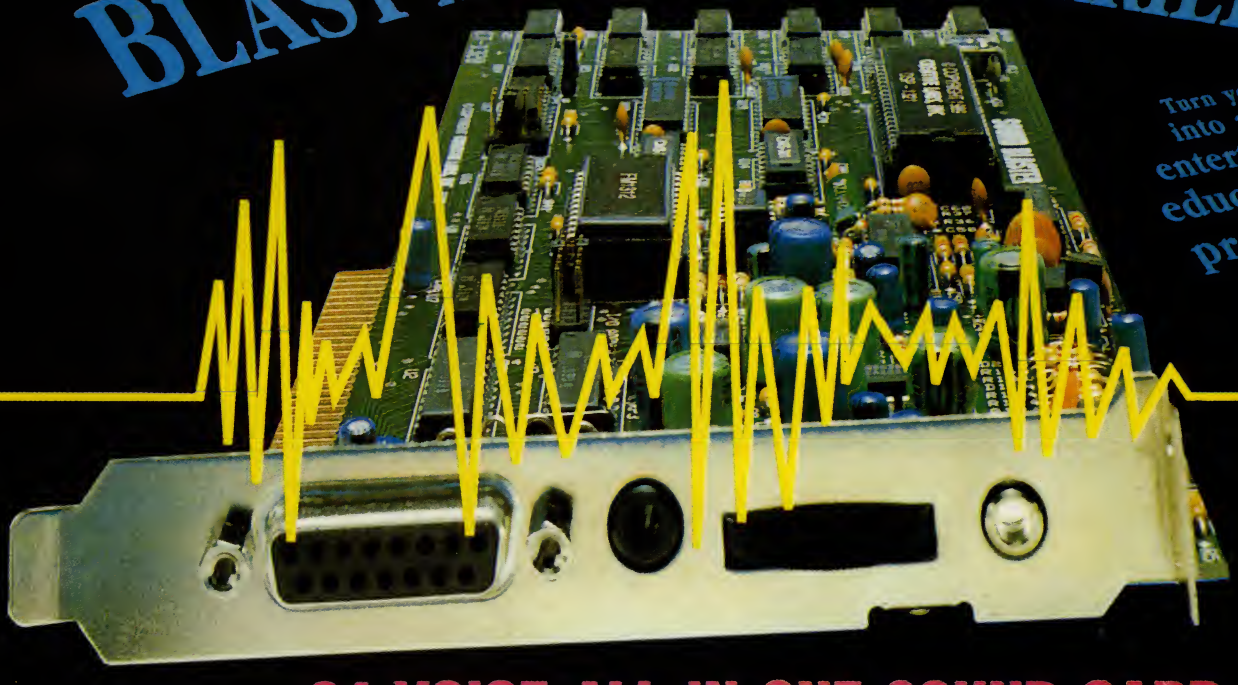

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STRATEGY PLUS

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Into the future

After years of splitting the glory with the business end of computing, the leisure software houses finally had their own day in the sun with the arrival of the European Computer Entertainment Show. A pity, then, that the most prestigious event in the industry's comparatively brief history should be squashed into an upstairs corner of the dismal cavern that is Earl's Court. True, the average punter doesn't care too much about aesthetics, but what do you say to the 2000 or so that were locked out on the Saturday, especially when half of the upstairs space was not in use? Full marks, though, to the games companies who put on a wonderful show in spite of the surroundings. They really do deserve better.

On the evidence of the show the Christmas blockbuster promises to be 'Console Wars'. Will the all-conquering Nintendo beat the old warrior Commodore? And what of the Virgin Sega? A similar type of battle, and one with implications for UK gamers, has already been fought in the US. The winners were the console kings. The losers were the 16 bit software houses, some of whom suffered damage which proved to be terminal. As Nietzsche would have predicted, the strong survived, but it was a close call. Many of the UK software houses appeared to have surveyed the damage on the US battlefield and changed their strategies accordingly, all of which is good news for our readers.

Most companies now appear to realise that arcade games have little future on the 16 bit format now that the consoles are here in force. The result of this rethink has produced some bizarre marriages. Who would have thought, for example, that a company like Ocean (motto: 'If it moves, blast it') would be distributing the ecologically sound and extremely pacifistic **Sim Earth** (the follow up to the highly regarded **Sim City**)? Or that Domark, hitherto associated with games of a less than cerebral nature, would be producing a massive simulation of the Vietnam war (currently being programmed by Matthew '**Imperium**' Stibbe. Combine this with **Team Yankee** (another surprise) from Entertainment Inc, and the recent releases (**Action Stations** and **White Death**) from Storm Software on their Internecine label, and you begin to realise that what was once a drift towards strategy is now a force 10 gale.

Clearly some kind of psychic force is at work here (not least in the sudden appearance of this magazine), for the amount of interest expressed in strategy in general, and wargames in particular, by visitors to our stand certainly indicated a surge in demand. Not that adventurers need feel neglected; confirmation of our story last month that Sierra On-Line are to open a UK office asap is great news indeed as is the comeback of the Infocom games on Virgin's budget label. The advent of CD ROM (a format which we will be covering) next year should invigorate the genre by eliminating the memory restrictions which at present impede development. Undoubtedly the most requested item from our readers was for a hints section. In response we proudly present Professor Plum who will be contributing an erudite column each month.

In the aerated world of flight sims we were very impressed by some of the add-ons featured at the show. Soundboards are now considered *de rigeur* by armchair pilots, but the Yoke by RC Simulations and the voice recognition system by Corvex transported us to cloud nine. Full reviews of these extraordinary products soon.

In summary, the European Computer Entertainment Show was one of which the industry (though not the organisers) could feel proud. The variety and quality of games on offer was outstanding, and if the forthcoming releases deliver only half of the promises that the press releases claim, then you're in for a tremendous year of gaming. Better warn the bank manager, though. SP

STRATEGY PLUS
Lamerton House, 27 High Street,
Ealing, London W5 5DF
Tel: 081-567 7740 Fax: 081-579 6485

Editor
Brian Walker

Design & Production
Paul Mason

Reviews Editor
Jonathan Turner

Contributors
GEORGE CAMPBELL, DEREK CARVER, THEO CLARKE, SONIA DUNCAN, IAN MARSH, DAVE MORRIS, DAVID PRINGLE, PAUL RIGBY, JOHN SCOTT, MAURICE THOMAS, MIKE WOODHOUSE

Advertising Agency
Media Specifics
3rd Floor, 242 Vauxhall Bridge Road,
London SW1V 1AU
Tel: 071-828 7141 Fax: 071-828 6685

Distributors:
UK
Diamond-Europress
Unit 1, Burgess Road, Ivyhouse Lane,
Hastings, East Sussex TN35 4NR
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Tel: 021-788 3112

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PORTS OF CALL

Down And Out In Panama And London

by Brian Walker

THIS curious game at least lives up to its title: German programmers, an American software house, distributed via their Paris office. Older readers (over 12) may recall this game was available a few years ago on the Amiga. Just when you thought it had sailed into collectors heaven, back it comes with a brand new refit.

As a budding shipping magnate, your task is to start off by purchasing a lowly 'tramp' steamer, deliver cargoes, become a millionaire and...

Unfortunately they seemed to have missed out the part of marrying an assassinated President's wife. The trick here is to buy the right ship at the right price, charter a cargo, and then deliver it as efficiently (not necessarily as quickly) as possible. If things were as simple as that there would be no game. So they aren't.

Prices vary according to the market. Somewhat improbably you are never advised of the state of the market. This means you must acquire one of three things: 1) a notepad, 2) an Amiga with a printer or 3) a good memory.

Nervous Wreck

Fuel prices vary too from port to port, but here again there is no facility for recording the fluctuations. It is somewhat inexplicable that a game that describes itself as 'software with hard facts' cannot deliver either a proper balance sheet, or a general expenditure listing. Sure, you can take notes, but what's the point of having a computer? You can get profit and loss accounts from your 'office' but the lack of detail renders them irrelevant.

Ports of Call's reputation as a good strategy game is further undermined by the inclusion of several random events, such as rats invading your floating nightmare ('pay $20 000 for pestokil'). **Ports of Call** is on the verge of being a great game, which makes it all the more frustrating when you come across these **Monopoly** type events. The graphics, for example, are excellent. The increase in fuel consumption as you increase knots is cleverly worked out, as are the varying delivery rates.

The most entertaining parts of the game, though, are the (optional) arcade sequences where you must guide your ship in and out of the harbour, or avoid the icebergs at sea. There is also a collision sequence involving radar, but the manual does not see fit to address this. In fact, the manual is vague on several points. The 'hidden agenda' factor is high here.

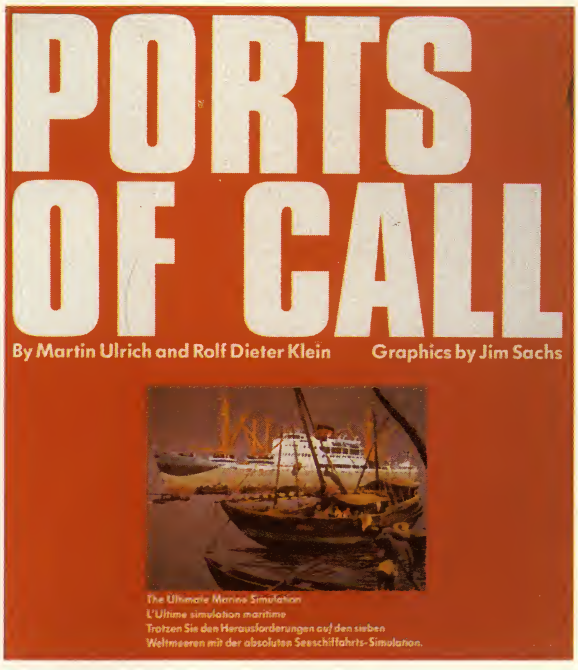
Hello Sailors

Curiously, **Ports of Call** is essentially a multi-player game (up to four). In fact no computer opponents are provided. You can play solitaire, but then you miss out completely on the market economy ('supply and demand') that other players create. If you did play in this mode, however, you would certainly need the print option provided by the Amiga. Perhaps a bit of history could be created here by going against the current trend and converting this into a board game.

The real curio, though, I've saved till last: put out more flags for the 'Life Size Sound Enhancer'. This consists of a special 25 pin adapter which you should insert in a 'standard parallel port'. As PCs don't have 'standard' parallel ports the wisdom of the inclusion of this contraption immediately becomes suspect.

It's A Cinch

The manual advises that you should connect the adapter to your hi-fi via a 'cinch cable'. Even the most ardent technophiles around the office had not heard of this one, so we assumed a typo had occurred and connected the only thing that would fit: a 'Walkman' jack. Unfortunately the only sound that was emitted consisted of a strange hum, with vague seagull noises in the background. A great idea then, gone slightly awry. Kind of like the game itself. SP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Designed by
Rolf Dieter Klein and
Martin Ulrich

Published by
The Disc Company

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the PC (£34.99)
Reviewed on the PC

Hercules, CGA, EGA

No PC soundboards
supported, but comes
with its own 'Life-Size
Sound Enhancer'

Amiga version
contains a print option

OVERRUN

Tactical Game Of Modern Land Warfare

by George Campbell

OVERRUN is a complex simulation of small unit combat in both Europe and the Middle east. It covers a near future conflict in Europe between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, or combat in the Middle East from 1956 onwards. The level of command is tactical, with individual vehicles, guns, helicopters and squads of men. Most of the significant military nations are covered: Britain, France, Germany, Israel, Russia and the United States.

The **Overrun** map is composed of unobtrusive squares which represent 50 yards per side. The strategic map covers an area of up to 40 by 90, depending on the scenario, prohibiting any particularly long range armour duels. The tactical map is most often in use, giving a detailed view of an area 10 squares by 20. Map scrolling is fairly sluggish, but this is not too noticeable after a time.

Pulsing Action

The regular scenarios are of a set duration: either 30 or 60 one minute turns. Each turn is subdivided into three combat pulses. Initiative during each pulse is determined randomly, rather than sequentially. Once combat has begun the player has no control over his units, as they will act upon instructions given during the orders phase. The combat phase can take from five to eight minutes processing time for a moderately large engagement. This wait can often be frustrating, but can be kept short by using small forces.

Four scenarios are provided for Europe, and four for the Middle East. Even one of the less complex scenarios can take many hours to play. It is even possible to embark upon campaign play, which is essentially a number of consecutive scenarios with additional rules. To supplement the preset scenarios there is a facility for building your own. In less than 10 minutes a custom scenario can be developed, with the desired terrain features, weather, visibility, battle parameters, mission objectives, and participating units. The units themselves can be edited to alter command rating, skill level, morale and the weapons used.

Extensive Forces

An extensive list of units is provided for both theatres. The tanks listed include all major Main Battle Tanks (MBTs) such as Challenger, Leopard 2, Abrams, AMX-40, Merkava and even the intimidating Soviet T-94. Along with the tanks there are infantry fighting vehicles, armoured cars, artillery, missile systems, support units, helicopters and various types of squad. There are approximately 200 distinct units, with each nationality well represented.

Each unit is rated for size, speed, crew, first shot rating, range finder rating, and the use of thermal sights. Armour distribution is detailed: included is a rating versus HEAT and kinetic rounds for front, top and side/rear. The presence of reactive armour is indicated, and is progressively degraded during combat. The **Overrun** rule book is accompanied by a briefing manual which lists all the units and weapons in an easy to read fashion.

Up to four weapon systems may be allocated to each unit, from well over 100 for all countries. These range from automatic rifles and flamethrowers to Hellfire, ADATS and MLRS. Overall weapon effectiveness is defined by HEAT and kinetic penetration, accuracy, range, infantry attack rating, and ammunition limitation. In combat a unit may be ordered to set the range for its weapons, otherwise it will always attempt to engage when an enemy unit is a legitimate target.

Planes Missing

There is an absence of fixed wing aircraft in **Overrun**, so unfortunately the A-10 is unavailable. An Apache is the next best thing, with the Havoc a close second. Any helicopter may be in one of four states: hovering, slow or fast flying, and evading. There are eight altitude settings, which affect susceptibility to ground fire. A few brief battle will provide an object lesson in helicopter vulnerability. It is in no way a flying tank as perceived by some. I managed to lose two Cobras to SA-7s on the first combat pulse of my second combat turn.

While combat is in progress the player receives a constant stream of reports. The information gained relates to weapon type, factored accuracy, the range of an attack, and any pertinent result. A typical display might read:

73mm Gun Fire
Accuracy 81% Range 7
Kill 4

Particular attention should be paid to the range of incoming ordnance as it is frequently difficult to locate an enemy unit. I soon learned to dread Soviet Sagger teams, which seemed inordinately difficult to winkle out.

The menu driven order system

Designed by
Gary Grigsby

Published by
SSI/US Gold

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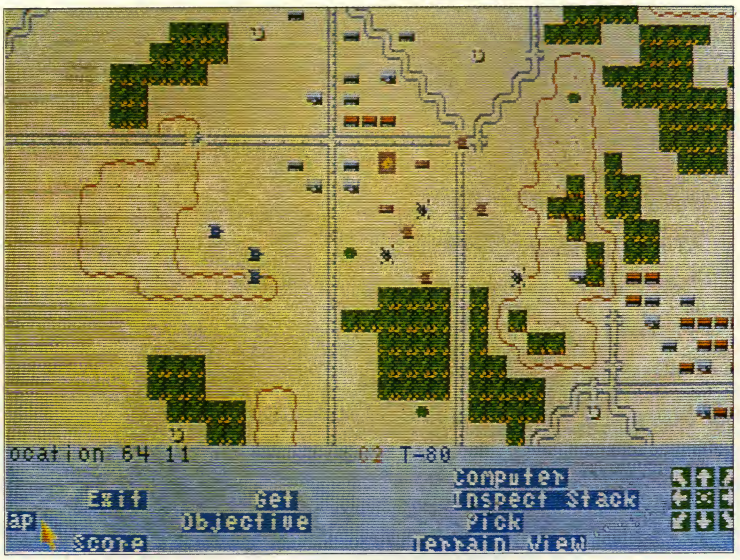
Available for the
Amiga
Reviewed on the
Amiga

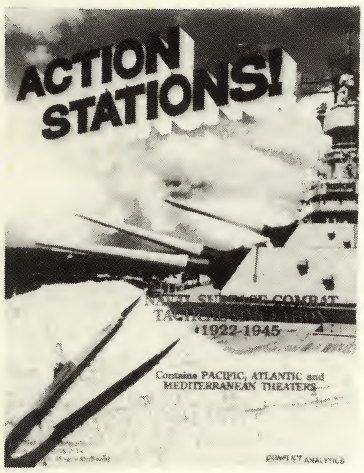
permits a wide variety of options. Included is movement, inspection of enemy units, artillery bombardments, line of sight determination and weapons inventory. Movement itself takes place during the combat pulses, and so is effectively simultaneous. It is worth noting that an enemy unit is not subject to specific attacks but is attacked as a consequence of a friendly unit pursuing its objective.



Acquired Taste

Game play is the most important criterion for a computer wargame. **Overrun** is complex, and difficult to get to grips with early on. A notable frustration is the lengthy delay during a combat turn when there are a moderate number of units. Early on it is not easy to pay attention to such things as coherent formations, effective reconnaissance, and pursuit of the mission objective. The rule book sensibly advises playing the same basic scenario a number of times to acquire competence in handling units.

Overrun is not instantly likable, requiring a good deal of perseverance to make progress. The 50-page rule book is a considerable hindrance to immediate involvement. In some respects SSI have made it too detailed, affecting playability for novices. A useful feature might have been an option with basic rules to help players ease into the game system. **Overrun** will certainly appeal to gamers who crave attention to detail. It may also engender respect for the individuals who must make tactical decisions in real life. I certainly have a greater appreciation of the complexity and uncertainty of modern warfare. SP



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SUPREMACY

Demigods In Space

by George Campbell

SUPREMACY is a complex space strategy game, involving colonisation, invasion, and management of people and resources. In 2010 the discovery of four new dimensions has left the Epsilon universe vulnerable to attack. Each dimension is a distinct planet system, with Starbase at one end and an enemy base at the other. In between are a number of barren planets, ripe for colonisation once they have been formatted by an atmosphere processor and an Amiga disk. The four alien planet systems represent different levels of play, each more challenging than the one before. In the Hitotsu system, for example, a tyrant called Wotok leads a race of obese ape-like creatures, and is the easiest to defeat. Smine commands his telepathic followers in the Futatsu system. In the Mittsu system resides Krart, who rules a race of aggressive reptilians. The most formidable foe is Rorn, a ruthless demi-god.

Soylent Green

Game time passes at the rate of one day every five seconds, with 60 days in each year (though there were 64 days in my version). Events can, therefore, overtake even the most careful of planning. It is quite possible to become mesmerised as information is continually updated.

Starbase is the starting point for all operations. You enter play with a variable quantity of credits, energy, minerals, food, and fuel. Revenue, in the form of credits, is gained by setting a tolerable tax rate. A high tax rate doubles as an effective population control. In general, food production lags behind demand, and food surpluses need to to be shipped back from established colonies. Once Starbase has reached a population of 30 000 a tax rate of 40% brings in plenty of hard cash.

Resources are necessary to construct units for expansion within the system. An essential unit is the horticultural station, without which any food stockpile will soon be depleted.

Beserkers

As the game progresses horticultural stations will spread across the surface of Starbase. Total self-sufficiency is impossible to attain, but dependency on imports can be minimised. Solar satellites and core-mining stations are both vital for Starbase development. The satellites, which are reasonably cheap to build, ensure that industry runs at full power. A core-mining station extracts fuel and minerals from planet cores. Satellites, mining stations, and horticultural stations are all capable of space flight, permitting them to be quickly despatched to colonies.

Early in the game an atmosphere processor is required to make a planet habitable. This procedure is termed formatting, and is usually achieved all too quickly. The processor sets up a colony with enough resources to survive for a limited period, until a proper base can be established with the aid of Starbase. It is also wise to send out a moderate garrison to guard against enemy depredations.

The platoon management system enables 24 platoons to be recruited, trained, equipped, and deployed. They are outfitted with equipment according to whatever fiscal priorities dictate. Effective equipment is costly, but this is a secondary consideration as platoons alone can win the game. They also accrue battle experience when successful, so it is best not to send them in piecemeal.

Heavy Metal

Planetary conquest is a valid method of colonisation. A typical alien civilian has no qualms about serving a new dictator. The procedure is simple: land a battlecruiser, disembark the platoons, and start a fight. Combat resolution is nothing special, but the accompanying graphics are superb. During combat the aggression level of troops may be altered in steps of 25%, at which point the warrior displayed seems despondent, while at 100+ he goes completely berserk.

Random events are important, and may have positive or negative effects. Electro-magnetic storms, comets, and meteor activity adversely affect planets. Dissatisfied with nature, your scientists might mistakenly unleash a devastating nuclear explosion, leaving an entire planet lifeless. Their summary execution is small comfort if it happened to be an important colony. Of course, not all events are bad, some may result in improved food production, greater output from mines, or the acquisition of energy reserves. The random events are reminiscent of **Millennium 2.2**, but are markedly superior.

The game is played at a frantic pace, moving from one crisis to another. It is sometimes possible for a small colony attack to be resolved before the relevant screen can be accessed. With practice the economic side becomes easier to manipulate, and vast riches can be generated. It soon becomes apparent that considerable reserves of all resources can be

Continued opposite

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Probe Software

Published by
Virgin Mastertronic

Available on all formats
Reviewed on the Amiga

EGA, VGA (256 colours, high res)

AdLib, Roland MT-32 soundboards supported

XIPHOS

Trading Spaces

by Maurice Thomas

XIPHOS is a game which would appeal to the small band of **Elite** refugees who still roam this star-system. It involves docking with space stations, shooting aliens for money, and keeping an eye on your energy levels lest the 'enemy' penetrate your shields and send you to an airless grave. That said, the resemblances to **Elite** are definitely on a mechanical level, and as far as the eventual aims are concerned **Xiphos** could not be more different.

You find yourself as one of the few representatives of the Galactic Council within Xiphan territory. This is weird, since the Xiphan Empire doesn't really exist in normal space. For those of you who remember your *Hitch-hiker's Guide* and the Krikkit Wars (qv), the Xiphans have constructed 'gates' into a series of parallel universes, and it is through these gates that you must travel to get to the Xiphans. Unfortunately, they are in the middle of a civil war that has been raging for centuries, and as your ultimate goal is to get through to the sixth universe and destroy the evil artificial intelligence that dwells there (qqv Krikkit Wars), you may have wished for a less hostile situation in the intervening space.

Ship Shape

Do not, however, be daunted. You are equipped with the hardest ship this side of the *Dark Star*, namely the *Arrow*. This ship carries tons and tons of energy, loads of missiles, and is well armoured to boot. It is faster than most Xiphan ships, and more manoeuvrable. This doesn't help, though, if you are as adept at controlling a ship as I am.

The 'space view' system is much harder to master than that of **Elite**, since you have to behave in terms acceptable to space, like responding to inertia, and firing missiles that take some time to reach their target rather than instantaneous lasers. This, of course, means that targets can have moved by the time your missiles reach them.

Floating Planets

Combat is essential, however, to facilitate trade between yourself and the two Xiphan factions. You have to dock at space stations to carry out trade, and there is a wide and interesting range of these – from residential dwellings to old Xiphans' Homes, where, it is said, the creatures fester out their remaining years as pools of green slime. At most of these stations you can get hold of supplies for your mission. Both sides pay you bounties for exterminating ships of the other side, and with these you can bargain for energy, missiles, information or fuel. There is no material trade to be had as in **Elite**; you simply live off your combat earnings.

The pictorial aspect of the game is most impressive – huge floating planets dog the background, although their reluctance to expand as you fly towards them is rather confusing. The spaceship sprites are easily differentiated, and there is not the plethora of command buttons that rendered **Elite** unplayable until the manual had been rote-learned. It is also extraordinarily obvious when you have been hit by a missile – the thing looms up to the side of your viewscreen and then goes BANG very loudly.

Shoot From The Hip

These things aside, though, **Xiphos** did not grip my attention and shake it firmly. I feel the preoccupation with space combat in a game which will obviously take some time to complete rather let it down. Too much is live or die, and not enough time is given to the thinking player who may wish to communicate with, ally with, or rip off the aliens. That said, I guess any budding space commandoes out there would be itching to pit their trigger fingers against the mighty Xiphos. SP

Designed by
Anthony Wilkes

Published by
Electronic Zoo

Price £24.99

Available for the
Amiga and ST

Supremacy, continued

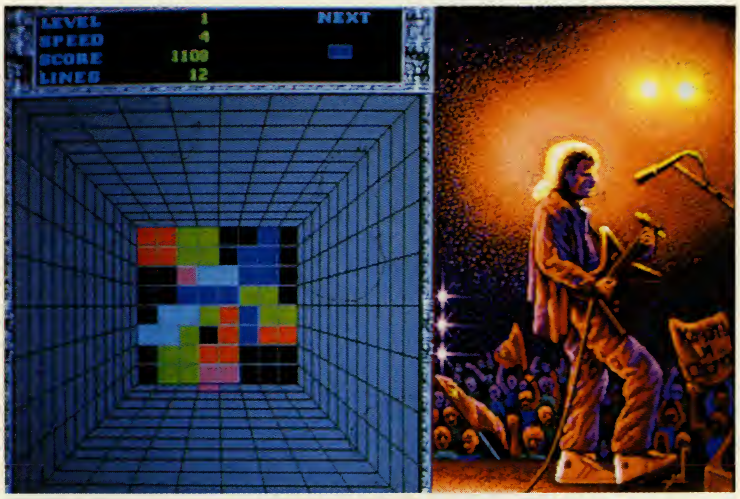
built up, except food. **Supremacy** would have been even better had there been a more varied choice of units to build, particularly military hardware. Platoon equipment is hardly relevant as they are invariably given the best protection and most potent weapons. The inclusion of awesome vessels able to indulge in annihilation on a planetary scale would have been appreciated. Platoons would have benefited from tanks, aircraft, and the like. In short, the combat side of the game is not as strong as it should be, though the visuals make up for much.

From the superb 96 page manual through to the stunning graphics, Probe Software get full marks for presentation. The bid for a place in software space is a fierce one. **Supremacy** has just upped the ante. SP

WELLTRIS

Back From The USSR

by Sonia Duncan



IMAGINE that you are peering down into the recesses of a dark cubic well. At regular intervals, brightly coloured shapes slide down the wall and slither across the floor, reaching a stop when they encounter a previous shape or the opposite wall.

The object of this game is to manipulate the shapes by rotation and movement around the walls so that they will neatly interlock with the pieces already in place on the floor. As soon as a line is filled, it disappears, thus freeing space for subsequent pieces. Any piece which does not fit entirely on the floor of the well causes the wall(s) it touches to be blocked, and the next three pieces to fall.

Open Door

Points are scored by placing shapes and clearing lines, causing the game to gather speed until all four walls are blocked simultaneously. If you think this all sounds rather familiar, then the chances are that you have played **Tetris**, the seemingly simple game which captivated so many people. Alexei Pazhitnov, grand mathematician of the Soviet Academy of Science and designer of **Tetris**, has added a new dimension, and called it **Welltris**.

The game opens with a rather colourful view of Red Square. The various options are presented in a rather interesting graphic – a pair of ice skaters not dissimilar to Torville and Dean (an odd choice for a Russian game perhaps?) skating around a crowded rink.

The game pieces of **Welltris** are multi-coloured geometric shapes made up of square segments. The three levels of difficulty are differentiated by the composition of the shapes. Level one consists of pieces made from two, three or four squares. Level two shapes are always four squares, while level three shapes comprise two, three, four and five squares.

Speed Freak

The difference in the playing pieces certainly changed the nature of the game, but since my first attempt at level two yielded a higher score than any previous level one game, I am not convinced that it is more difficult. Level three, however, did prove more challenging.

The speed factor governs the rate at which pieces fall down the well. The speed increases automatically during the game according to the number of lines filled. The well graphic only occupies about half the screen – the remaining portion displays a picture which changes every speed level. Any connection between the pictures and the game is not immediately apparent, other than a certain eastern European flavour. I can only assume that in addition to filling the screen, they are intended to provide an incentive to attain higher speed levels.

Pieces are moved around the walls using the cursor direction keys in one of two ways. The default mode calls for switching keys as pieces move from the horizontal walls to the vertical walls. This was frustrating initially, and while the necessary dexterity can be achieved with practice, I eventually abandoned this mode since at high speed there is simply not time to change keys before the piece crash lands. The alternative method uses left and right cursor keys for clockwise and anti-clockwise movement, so the same key will send the piece chasing round and round all four walls.

Base instinct

As an experienced **Tetris** player my initial reaction to **Welltris** was unenthusiastic. The addition of pictures to pad out the screen appeared incongruous and the three dimensional aspect seemed an almost unnecessary complication. However, I was wrong.

Under the pretext of playing enough games to form a considered opinion, I have become completely addicted to this game. The different playing levels introduce welcome variety into the base game, although I found tinkering with the speed levels of less interest.

My only reservation concerns the acceleration of speed. A point has now been reached where I can consistently achieve a certain score, but then get thrashed because the speed at which pieces fall precludes movement off their starting wall. At that point I am dead. I have tried the game on various sizes of PCs with similar results each time. Only hours of practice will determine whether the limitations are the machine's response or my own reactions. Given the amount of time I have spent on this game recently, that may not take very long!

The most frustrating part of all, is that even after countless games, I can't help thinking that something as obvious as placing shapes into a grid just cannot be difficult, and that next time I'll do better... SP

Designed by
Alexei Pazhitnov

Published by
Infogrames

Price £24.99

Available on all formats
Reviewed on the PC

CGA, EGA and Hercules

STAR CONTROL

Planet Of The Japes

by Brian Walker

SPACE is definitely the place these days. The latest vessel to arrive in an increasingly crowded galaxy is **Star Control**, a game full of people with daft names, and even dafter looking spaceships. Just as you've got your tongue around Bzrrak Ktazzz, out pops Ivana Or-Kochav, who is presumably on his/her/its way to the mining outpost at Mmrnmhrm.

The most improbable monicker, though, is reserved for General Juan O'Reilly (who presumably lives the life thereof). Yes, that's right. This is a very silly game. It is also quite a schizophrenic one. It would like to be a strategic game, however, its heart is really in the arcades of the cosmos. But let's not get all dour about this. **Star Control** *is* fun, and the graphics are, well, out of this world.

Play commences, naturally enough, in the year 2612. Earth has a treaty with something called The Alliance of Free Stars. If this alliance wasn't under threat, there would not be much of a game. First stop is the 'main activity' menu. The most notable feature of this is the option to switch control of the arcade game *or* the strategic game over to the computer. Those looking for the latter should move right along to the 'full game' and skip 'melee'. The full game comprises nine scenarios, including one for beginners. In addition to the scenarios supplied, there is an edit facility which enables you to customise them.

For the purposes of this review the 'Escalation' scenario was selected, though subsequently they all proved to be much of a muchness. The general aim is to establish a sound economic base before proceeding to the alien annihilation phase. This is achieved by a combination of mining and colonisation. But it's no big deal. Resource management is not the name of this game. Most events seem pretty random.

In essence this is a simple game made to seem difficult by the manual, which tries too hard to hard to be clever when it should be concentrating on presenting a user friendly structure. Clarity in the game itself is not aided either by the 'rotating display'; this is a small but perfectly beautiful screen depicting the galaxy and your bases therein. Unfortunately the constant swirl makes it hard to establish not only where you're coming from, but where you're going to.

What is certain is that when you land on an occupied planet all hell breaks loose in the shape of a computer controlled (if this option is selected) arcade sequence. The spaceships that appear in this phase resemble everything from flying brillo pads to cosmic hairbrushes.

Flying Brillo Pads

Fortunately the graphics are truly spectacular in 256 colour VGA. *Un*fortunately you'll need lots of RAM to get at them. The manual recommends a (minimum) 8MHz AT, and disablement of all TSR programs. If you have got VGA, the game gets a tentative recommendation on the strength of the visuals and some nice humour. You'd have to be a real grouch not to get a laugh out of characters like Syreen: a pink haired lovely who has a penchant for piloting her spaceship while sat on the loo, dressed in nothing but blue fishnet stockings (her ship is called 'The Penetrator'). The decision to add a strategy element to the game was added, presumably, to appeal to the man who buys *The Times* solely to conceal his copy of the *Sun*. SP

Designed by
Fred Ford and Paul Reiche III

Published by
Accolade

Price £29.99

Available on the PC

CGA, EGA, VGA (256 colour)

Roland MT-32, AdLib, CMS soundboards supported

Joystick and keyboard interface

Full 640K RAM required for VGA

THE ANCIENT ART OF WAR

Sun Tzu And The Oldest Profession

by Dave Morris

Designed by Dave and Barry Murry

Published by Brøderbond/Domark

Price £29.99

Available for the PC

CGA, EGA, Hercules

First published in 1984. This is the new EGA version

A DRY dusty plain stretches ahead of your army. Exhausted and hungry after a series of defeats, your men slouch under the weight of their equipment as they march sullenly westwards. Ahead of you lies an enemy fort. Currently it is guarded only by two knight units, whose good shape will make them a tough but beatable challenge to your troops. However, if the enemy should recruit just one archer unit to the fort's garrison you could be stood off at the walls. Even worse, the last report you received from your spy detachment before they were lost in the western mountains suggests that a fresh enemy army may already be hurrying to reinforce the fort garrison. And indeed, even as you reach the edge of the plain, you catch sight of the dust kicked up by another army beyond your destination...

The Ancient Art of War is a rather good game, bearing the same relation to most computer wargames that chess bears to SPI-type board games. Like chess, it abstractly represents the important features of warfare (terrain, supply and troop types) rather than trying to simulate them. Also like chess, this gives it considerably more replay value than a simulation game could ever have, since the pared-down essentials give much more scope for considering the exact niceties of strategy and tactics.

Put Out More Flags

The screen initially shows a strategic map on which your own armies are visible, as well as those of the enemy within visibility range. (The distance at which you see the enemy is one of several variables you can set at the start of the game, others being supply range and attrition levels.) In addition to various terrain features, you can see villages (supplying food) and forts (recruiting men). The object, at least as far as the game designers are concerned, is to capture control of the 'flags' representing points of strategic importance. You can also call up a view that shows the rough zones of influence across the map, in the form of blotches of black, white and grey.

Armies are moved by selecting them, moving the cursor to the intended destination, and pressing ENTER again. The army will then start to move off as directed while you set about giving orders to others. I must say this is a lot more player-friendly than most computer games. You can also change the speed of the game, allowing time to consider an enemy's progress at snail's pace, or speeding up the view to see units scurrying about the map like army ants.

Each army consists of up to fourteen figures – I prefer to envisage them as representing units of men – who may be of four types: Barbarian, Archer, Knight and Spy. Formation becomes important during the zoom-in tactical engagements, and can be altered between any of nine configurations (some of which can be customized) which exploit the advantage of different mixes of unit. Barbarians tend to beat Archers (since they can close in fast for melee) while Archers can pick off the slow-moving Knights; Knights against Barbarians favours the former, though, since they are better fighters. In theory the ratio of advantage that a unit has to the next in the series (Archers v Knights, for example) is 2:1. In practice I've found that a couple of Archers placed well back can pick off an awful lot of enemy Knights.

Spies have no fighting ability, but they can detect enemy armies at longer range. Once an enemy army appears on the map, you can find out its composition but not the formation it is using.

Supply lines are formed to the villages as long as an enemy unit does not interpose. This is crucial to the game, since being out of supply quickly knackers an army and it is therefore possible to wipe out superior forces if you can nimbly cut off their supply beforehand.

The game works well on a strategic level, but is definitely not suitable for tactical simulations (as the Pharsalus scenario shows). You can play against any of eight computer-operated generals – and therein lies my only criticism. The 'cleverest' generals make it their priority to go for the flags that artificially define areas of importance. As long as you retain just one flag, you haven't lost. This means that some supposedly clever bugger like Sun Tzu might waste inordinate effort going after a flag you don't care about – but Genghis, who is intended to be easier to beat, understands the *real* art of war.*

All in all, a good game with strong replay potential. *And* you can use it to design your own scenarios.

* 'Shaft the enemy.'

TEAM YANKEE

The Russkies Will Rise Again

by John Scott

OH WOW. Heavy, man. The balloon has finally gone up, and the Red Army armour is rolling in to conquer us all. Who can save us? Only the four platoons of the tank company known as **Team Yankee**, provided that YOU can lead them to victory.

Team Yankee is based on the novel of the same name by Harold Coyle. I haven't read it, but having played the game, I surely intend to. OK, the scenario may seem a bit dated, given the current atmosphere of *bonhomie* between East and West, but don't let that put you off, for this is a game and a half!

When you load the game, after the obligatory movie-style credits, you are presented with a picture of a filing cabinet. This contains eight files, and each one can hold information about your exploits. In other words, this is where you save the game in order to continue from where you left off last time. When you create a file, it will relentlessly keep track of all your kills and losses. The file will only be updated if you successfully complete a scenario, and if you fail, you'll have to try again before you can proceed to the next chapter. The game consists of five such chapters, but if you think that five successful scenarios means that you have cracked the game, think again.

You enter the war as a Private (First Class). If you complete the entire campaign you will be promoted to Corporal, at which point you begin again at chapter one. Further successful campaigns will raise you to the rank of Sergeant, then Staff Sergeant, and finally the ultimate rank of Captain. Of course, with promotion comes increased responsibility, so each time you play through the game the tactical skills you have to employ will be more complex and demanding. For example, on the first rank the Russian vehicles all follow a set formula, and you should be quick to defeat them once you learn a few basic principles (like, don't shoot your own troops!). Also, your weapons, morale and vehicle damage will be reasonably restored between scenarios. However, on higher levels the Russians use all sorts of devious approaches, and you will have to carefully conserve your resources in what will become a war of attrition. In short, promotion to the rank of Captain will not come easy.

Having created your file, you have the option of playing a practice scenario – this is designed to introduce you to the basic principles of movement and combat in a situation where the enemy doesn't shoot back, but a newcomer to the game will initially find it quite a challenge. Within minutes of starting I was called a 'jerk' for shooting one of our own tanks, and later failed the mission for being too slow.

Securichore

If you choose to enter the game proper, you are presented with the Vehicle Identification/Copy Protection screen. This is an area where software publishers currently seem to be vying with one another to see who can devise the most tedious way to force the hapless player to look up the Nth Word in the Nth Paragraph, on the Nth line of Sub-Clause N in Volume N of the documentation.

At first glance **Team Yankee** appears to follow the trend, as you are requested to identify a vehicle (shown from every angle and also animated). I looked through the copious and technically perfect documentation, and supplied the correct answer – easy. Then I was asked to do it again with another vehicle. Muttering to myself, I complied. When the program thanked me politely and asked for a third ID, I was close to harsh language, but it was only when I began to play the game that I realised that there was a point to it all.

In **Team Yankee**, it is vitally important that you learn to instantly recognise and identify a vehicle – mainly so that you don't blow up a friendly unit, but also so that you can quickly choose the best weapon to use on an enemy. I take off my hat to the designer for producing a protection routine which is actually useful – one of this game's many innovations.

Next comes the briefing screen, which presents all the info which intelligence can provide about the forthcoming scenario, and allows you to set up artillery bombardments of various types, depending on scenario and rank. A map shows all major geographical features, the disposition of your forces, and any known enemy units. It may also include various diagrams which are referred to in the briefing text. This text is shown in a 'notebook' to the right of the map and details the objectives of the current scenario.

In The Smoke

An 'information' icon allows you to gather further information form the map, such as important facts relating to your platoon and local topography. Having studied the briefing carefully, a quick click on the 'battle' icon will let loose the dogs of war!

At this point four windows appear on the screen, each representing the terrain as seen by one of your four platoons. Each gives an excellent 3-D

Designed by
Oxford Digital Enterprises

Published by
Empire Simulation

Price £24.99

Available for all formats
Reviewed on the Amiga

CGA, EGA, VGA, Tandy 16 colour

AdLid soundboard supported

representation of what action can be seen, vehicles, forests, buildings and so on. Each window can be independently rotated, zoomed, or switched to infra-red (rotation of the turret gives the chance for a quick look around, but doesn't alter your direction of travel; the zoom option is essential, since tank combat often occurs at very long ranges; the infra-red is useful at night, or to see through smoke, or even to spot enemy tanks hiding in the fringe of a forest – a common tactic). It is also possible to open fire on the enemy from these windows by loading the appropriate type of shell – which involves a realistic time delay – and moving your sights over the enemy.

Hits are not certain; again, in the interests of realism, some predetermined inaccuracy factors are included. Weaponry includes high explosive, armour piercing, and wire guided long range rounds, together with the trusty machine gun and useful smoke grenades.

In addition to the 3-D view, it is possible to switch to a map showing the area immediately around each platoon, or to a status screen which shows the morale and efficiency of each vehicle in the platoon. It's possible to zoom in or out of the map for a better look at the overall battle, and it is from this screen that you move your platoons. This is done by placing a mark on the map (representing the spot you want to move to) and then selecting your speed. Maximum speed is 50 miles per hour, but a lot depends on the terrain type. The program displays both speed and the estimated time of arrival at your destination.

The use of four screens in one is simply brilliant – at times its almost like playing on four computers at once. Even when lots of things are happening the program doesn't noticeably slow down, and it's not necessary to wait for an action in one screen to be completed before moving to another platoon.

Whenever you want to concen-

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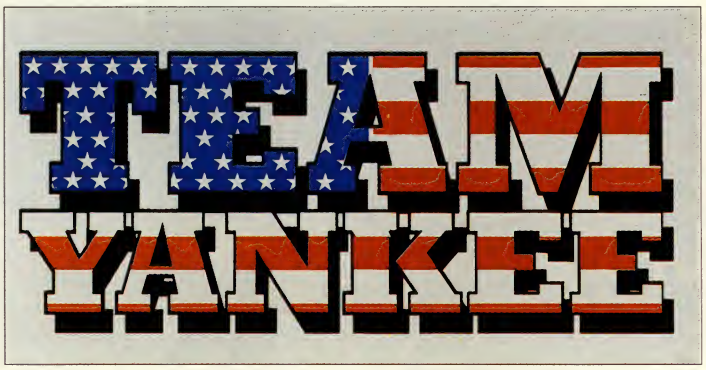


Design notes by David Pringle

OUR INVOLVEMENT with **Team Yankee** began at a clandestine meeting in the bar of an Oxford hotel in December 1988. A contact in the computer industry let us know that the rights for the book *Team Yankee* were up for grabs.

The attraction was not only that the book had been an instant number one bestseller in the US, but that GDW was having some success with their board game version. We had the additional attraction that we were looking for a vehicle for the next generation of a three-dimensional graphics system which we had been developing over the previous two years. *Team Yankee,* a racy and detailed novel about modern tank warfare, seemed to be just what we were looking for.

That evening an introductory fax was rushed to Presidio Press, the book's publisher, in California. We had to persuade them that a British company could not only offer a good deal on paper, but would deliver the goods and create a product worthy of the book. A couple of weeks of haggling, reworking of game proposals, company profiles and sample contracts, and we were there. We now possessed the world rights for the computer game of the book. All we had to do was start the real work.

A week later we went to the Las Vegas Consumer Electronics Show, where most of the entertainment software industry gathers every year. It was intriguing to catch up with large American publishers who we had pipped at the post. The most gratifying incident occurred when I passed 'Wild' Bill Stealey, Managing Director of Microprose, as he was informing a colleague that *Team Yankee* was the best book on warfare he had ever read.

The next six weeks saw a series of summit design meetings where we plotted out our course of action. Certain fundamental decisions had to be made. What sort of game did we want? Although the GDW board game is very good to play, the computer market demands real time action and instant response. Also, **Team Yankee** the computer game was intended to be a version of the book rather than the board game. How, for example, would we determine the types of scenarios? The book proves to be a wonderful inspiration here, since not only does it provide a highly detailed account of what it is like to sit in a tank in the middle of a battlefield, but it is replete with battle maps and information. Should we create a simulation or a war game? Well, after a lot of heated debate and argument, we decided on neither. A full simulation, like Microprose's admirable **M1 Tank Platoon**, demands scrupulous accuracy – which we felt gets in the way of game play at times. A wargame has too limited a market on home computer. We decided on a hybrid product with elements of action, simulation and stamdard wargame, but one where game play had priority. We wanted a product where the player needn't read 300 pages of documentation before being able to move his tank.

Our next move was to learn something about the basics of tanks and tank warfare. I wrote to the national

Continued opposite

trate on one particular unit, you can enlarge its window to fill the whole screen, and this usually offers additional commands. This, for example, is how you access the zoom and infrared options, not to mention your laser range finder. In the full screen map view it is possible to order your vehicles to assume wide or narrow formation, or to come to a dead stop. The precise formation of the platoon (line, column, wedge, echelon and so on) can also be specified.

A scenario may end – sometimes rather unexpectedly – for a number of reasons. A win may involve a successful attack, holding a defensive position for enough time, or destroying a majority of the attacking force. Victory criteria change according to your rank. Success in a scenario offers the option to save the result to your file, though you may not want to do this if most of your team have been wiped out in the process – remember, winning a battle is not the same as winning the war! A final debriefing screen will provide a summary of what you have achieved.

Hardware Shop

I find it hard to find fault with this game. For me, it worked perfectly, and I quickly found myself hooked on a genre of game which previously held no interest. One minor quibble is that the loading instructions suggested that performance would be enhanced if external disk drives were disconnected. This always bugs me, so I ignored the suggestion, and found that on a 1 meg machine everything appeared to work just fine.

There really ought to be more games of this calibre. Documentation is clear and comprehensive, including a wealth of background info on American and Russian organization, the hardware involved in modern armoured combat, and some hints on playing the game. I suspect that **Team Yankee** has been a labour of love, created by some very talented people who care deeply about their subject, and that's the best recipe for quality that I know. SP

centre for tanks at Bovington Camp and emerged from the local library with photocopies from every Jayne's Fighting Thingumijig I could lay my hands on. Videos of tanks in action and books about tanks going back to the year dot were procured from everywhere. Bovington replied that we could only visit them during their yearly open day, so we knew that we were not going to get much help from that quarter. Then, a journalist called Wilf Owen called up out of the blue, and we discovered that not only was he keen on computer games but that he had commanded tanks in Germany some years ago. Wilf became a very useful military advisor.

At the final design meeting we drew up schedules and apportioned work loads. Steven Green, the creator of our 3-D system, was going to work on improving it still further to achieve faster frame rates and tailor it to the specific needs of the game. Richard Horrocks was to work on the strategy elements of the game, with his first remit to create some sort of a strategy designer. Kevin Ayre was going to immerse himself in what tanks and battlefields looked like in order to create the graphics. And I ultimately detailed myself to put together some progressively more challenging scenarios.

At this point we still had a problem. Steven's 3-D system is certainly unique. It creates a convincing world by blending traditional vector images (for houses and roads and so on) with sized bit-mapped graphics (for tanks and trees). This lends much greater detail to certain objects than a purely vector world – tanks can be designed to show their rivets, for instance. However, we still felt that we needed an extra dimension to the design which would set it apart from any other game.

This was provided by Richard Yapp, another member of our team. He suggested that since Team Yankee consists of four tank platoons, why not allow the game to be played from the perspective of all four groups at once? In other words, allow the player to view the game with the screen split into four quarters. That was the route we followed. Steven then had to improve his code even further, because four views on screen at once can take a lot of extra time to process. And Richard Horrocks and I had to create scenarios which would at times force the player to control all four tank units at once.

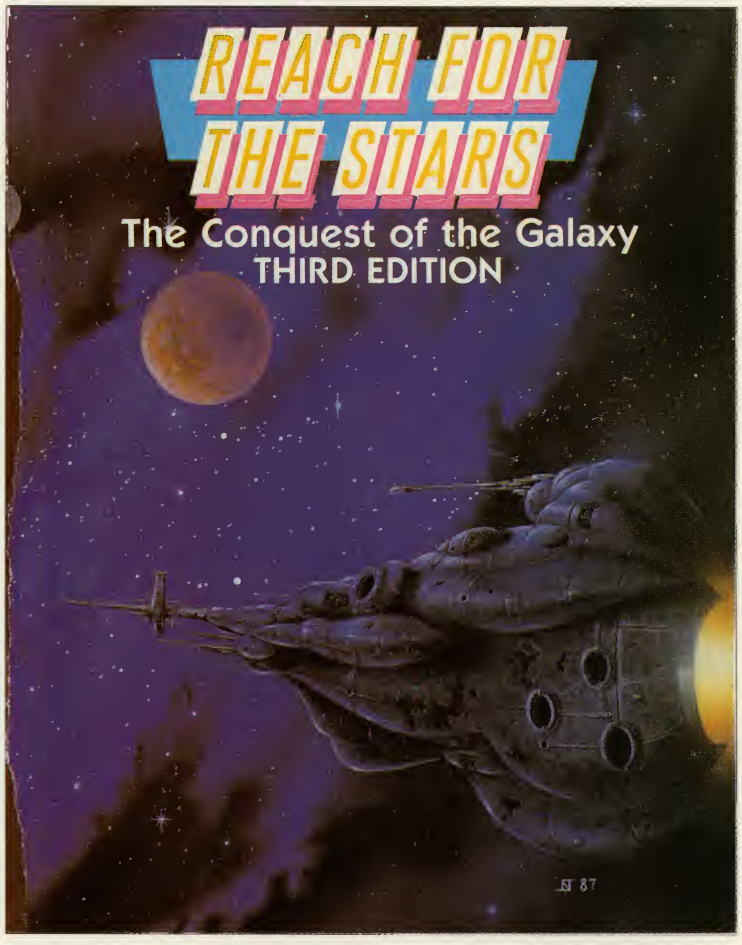
And so, here we are. The game is on the verge of being launched as I write. We scheduled 12 to 14 months for the development, and we finished the basic game a couple of months ago. Creating the underlying strategy code proved no easy task. Emulating the insides of forests was a geometrical nightmare. And incorporating French, German, Spanish and Italian text nearly broke the camel's back.

But at the end, when we had a couple of months to spare, with all of the time in the world to 'tweak' the scenarios, we had the best experience of all. The game proved fun and challenging to playtest, even after 100 or 200 hours. For that I've only got Steven Green, Richard Horrocks, Kevin Ayre and everyone else at Oxford Digital to thank. We hope you'll get as much satisfaction too. SP

UP, UP, AND AWAY

Strategy in SSI's Reach For The Stars

by Mike Woodhouse



IN ESSENCE, **Reach For The Stars** is an economics-based science fiction wargame: players (up to four, the computer filling in for lack of humans) must colonise planets and develop their economies in order to be able to wage war on their neighbours (or defend against the unwanted advances of said neighbours!) The game has two main scenarios, basic and advanced, each of which allows a number of different options to be selected, resulting in a wide variety of subtly different games.

The game is decided on the Victory Point (VP) totals of the players, VPs being awarded for success in economics and the various types of warfare available.

The action takes place on a 34 by 23 hexagonal grid which 'wraps' both horizontally and vertically (in other words, if you fly off the top of the map, you reappear at the bottom). The 54 stars, each of which may have one or more habitable planets, are dotted about this map. Stars are divided into five spectral types, each having a different distribution of the four planet types (Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Hostile). Of these, the G class stars are most likely (55%) to have Primary class planets, the most hospitable to life.

Each planet has three basic limits: Population, which indicates the maximum number of people supported; Industry, which dictates the number of factories you may build and Environment, which dictates population growth potential.

Economics are based on the production and expenditure of Resource Points (RPs) which occurs every second turn (the other being movement only). The number of RPs produced by a system is calculated by applying the following formula.

RPs = (Pop x 2) + (Ind Cap x Social Level) / 16

RPs are then allocated as seen fit by the owning player, using the production order entry screen. The main areas of expenditure are development of the environment, 'servicing' the population (supplying the consumer durables that make life worth living), building and maintaining planetary defences, constructing ships (colonists and warships)and investing in R&D (Ship technology only in the Basic game, Industrial and Navigational are added in the Advanced scenarios).

Ships are organised into Task Forces (TFs), each of which contains one or more vessels. TFs, rather than ships, are moved around the galaxy. Whenever ships of opposing empires meet in a star system, they fight, each side having the opportunity to bottle out (thus giving VPs to the opposition). Ships victorious in battle may carry assault troops in order to invade enemy colonies, or they may simply blast away at the unprotected people on the planet. Either way, VPs are gained.

The Basic Game

In the basic game, time is short: you have to develop a powerful economy fast enough to put a fleet together which will allow you to repel the invasion which is likely to arrive in 20 or so turns. Remember the RP formula – each unit of population gives a net 1 RP to spend on other things. You should look to get another colony started as soon as possible, to double your growth rate. Make sure you have three or four scouts in operation early on to ensure the early location of a Primary planet. Once you've found it, spend a turn's RPs on colony ships and send them off. The production turn before the colonists land should be devoted to maintenance only – let the balance go to the Global RP pool. That way, you'll be able to raise the Social Level of the

Reach For The Stars (referred to in this article as RFTS) was designed by Roger Keating and Ian Trout. Originally published in 1983 it has undergone two revisions, culminating in the edition which became available on the PC, Amiga, Apple II and C64 in 1988.

Early editions carried an acknowledgement of the influence which Stellar Conquest (originally published by Metagames, now available from Avalon Hill) had on the design.

RFTS retails for £24.95

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"ROMEO 25 - THIS IS MIKE 77 - SPOT REPORT - 5 T72 TANKS MOVING WEST - GRID 190852 - CONTINUING OVER"

Capt. Sean Bannon snapped his head to the left. There was only one place where the Russians could be, and that was on the hill 2200 metres away. All the training, planning and preparations were over. Team Yankee was about to learn if the team's seventy nine men and twenty five million dollars worth of equipment could do what they were supposed to do.

Team Yankee is designed to test your leadership and tactical skills to the quick. You can display in either **"quadrant mode"** where all four platoons may be controlled at once.

or

Full-screen Mode where the display homes in on just one platoon.

You have the flexibility to display either an overhead map view of the surrounding area, a simulated 3-d view of the battlefield, or a status screen showing the performance of all vehicles in a platoon. Irrespective of which screen mode you choose during battle, there is a constant column of information to the right of the screen.

To the right of the compasses are five icons which represent the various types of **weaponry** available to the unit.

MACHINE GUN - which is always available to the player and has an 'infinite' number of rounds.

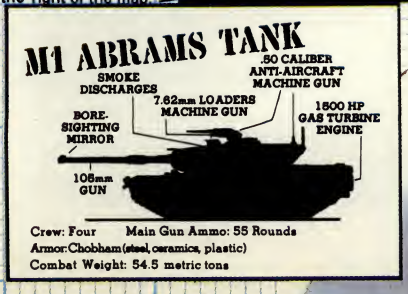
SMOKE - a smoke grenade which allows enemy vision to be obscured.

HEAT - a high explosive anti-tank round

SABOT - an armor-piercing tungsten shell

TOW - a high-range anti-tank missile

The major capability on the quadrant map screen is to alter the movement and formation of any platoon. The whole of the map may be viewed at once, or you may zoom into any portion of the battlefield using the icons to the right of the map.



Team Yankee is the definitive action simulation of modern tank warfare. Watch scenarios unfold on 3D battlefields with high definition graphics and keep track of the four tank platoons you control using the unique 4 quadrant display. Defend Hill 214 from Yuri Potecknov's crack tank platoons, attack Objective Link through sniper fire from forests, protect the Langen Gap from an entire Soviet tank battalion at night!

Five major scenarios based on the battles featured in the New York Times No. 1 best seller Team Yankee.

Engine smoke This will prove very useful in confusing your enemy if you find yourself in a tight corner.

Rotation icon and compass display.

Infra red (or thermal) imaging This feature is very useful for identifying vehicles camouflaged on the edge of forests. Contary to popular belief the thermal image is green and not red.

Zoom. When this icon is accessed the central portion of the screen is magnified by a factor of 10.

Laser range finder. The range finder will lock on to a reflective target if the firing cursor is placed directly over the object.

Wide formation icon. This increases the spacing between vehicles in your platoon to 100 metres.

Narrow formation icon. This reduces the inter-vehicle spacing in your platoon to 50 metres.

Vee. a vee formation.

Echelon left - places your vehicles on a right to left diagonal relative to your direction.

Wedge - places your vehicles in a wedge formation.

Scroll icon: The four arrows underneath the ETA display allow you to scroll your map in any of the four directions.

Dead Stop icon. This red icon, causes your platoon to come to a dead halt when clicked.

In line - places your vehicles in a line abreast relative to your direction.

Column - places your vehicles in a line ahead relative to your direction.

Echelon right - places your vehicles on a left to right diagonal relative to your direction.

EMPIRE SIMULATION

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new colony to an acceptable level (ensuring the colony doesn't die out) and you can get some industry built straight away. You should look to get the environment up towards 100 on all colonised planets: the fastest population growth is achieved that way.

Once you've got the hang of colonisation, you can keep colonising the galaxy to your heart's content... until the bad guys turn up and start taking your planets away, which is when you wonder why they've got warships and you haven't. Simple, you didn't build any. So the expansionist urge has to be tempered with a healthy dose of caution – when a colony doesn't have to be started, don't force it – buy some ships and defence bases (a bargain early on – they upgrade to new ship technology levels at no cost) and invest in R&D. Unfortunately, each planet can only contribute 100 RPs to R&D, so you need more colonies to be able to boost your investment. It's a balancing act.

The important thing to bear in mind is that your opponents (especially if they're not human) will almost invariably be placing a greater emphasis on shipbuilding than you. That's fine as long as you can catch up in time: your greater production power will eventually give you a fleet that can stomp on anything.

Once you've got some basic Mark I pickets out at the nearest stars for early warning of incoming nasties, devote any spare RPs to R&D on Ship Technology – Mark IIs only cost 700 and should form the backbone of your fleet. Any extra RPs can always earn interest in the global pool. Keep chipping away towards Mark III technology and go flat out for it if you ever encounter an enemy task force that has them. You will seldom see Mark IVs in enemy fleets.

Don't go on the offensive until you're sure that you have superiority in numbers – the loser of a battle gets no VPs. And never attack more than one opponent at the same time: blast them into the stone age one at a time.

Novas

You get plenty of notice of these, but they still cause the loss of the infrastructure of a planet whose star explodes, not to mention the cost of shipping the people off. If a nova warning is received for a planet where you have a minor colony, it may often be better to pump the RP output into the global pool and accept the mega-deaths when the star goes up. If a major colony gets melted, you have almost no chance of winning. On balance, I suggest you keep novas turned off. You won't miss them.

Natural Disasters

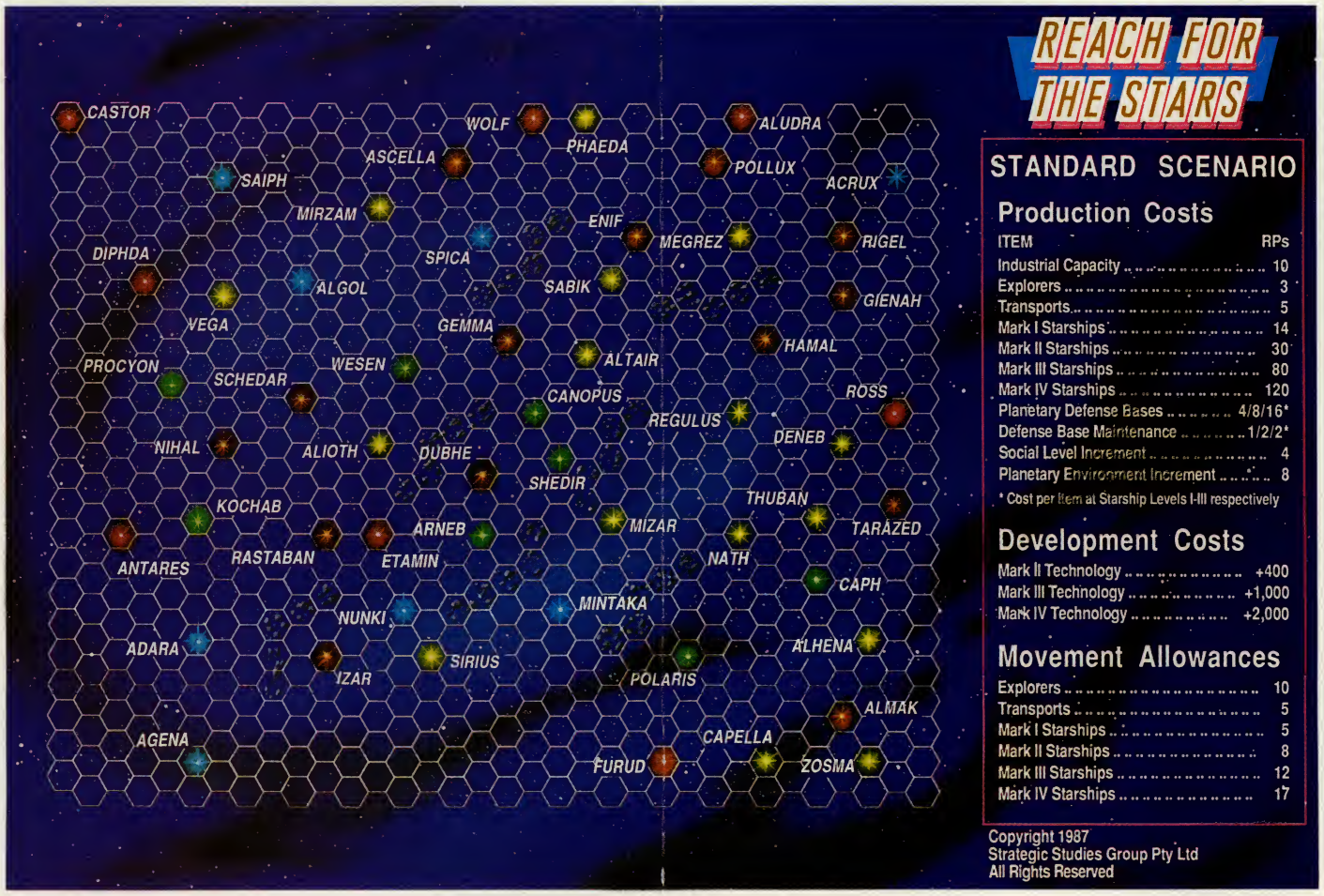
These are much more common than novas, and less final in their effect. In general, they cause a slowdown in economic growth for one or two production turns. Enable this option when you have a good grasp of the basic game, it increases the difficulty level slightly without unbalancing the game.

Xenophobes

Similar in impact to natural disasters, these cause systems to become interdicted: they may not use RPs from the global pool. Again, enable the option for a slight increase in difficulty. Try not to engage in combat in a xenophobe-infested system, especially if you're outnumbered.

Solar Debris

Slows movement, which has its good and bad points. Early on it can mean



colonists having to sit aboard ship instead of breeding on a planet. Later, it can make enemy ships take longer to get at you. Use when you want all the bells and whistles.

Random Star Map
The default map gives a balanced game. The random map may mean you having to start with an enemy as your next door neighbour. Alternatively, you may be so far from any habitable planet that colonisation becomes a logistical nightmare. I always use this option – it makes the strategic decisions different every time.

Task Force Set-up
Starting with a bunch of ships and colonists rather than an inhabited planet slows the game down too much for my liking. When used with the random star map, you can fall behind very quickly. If you try this option, keep a careful check on the VP totals – if an enemy finds a usable planet before you, it can be hard to catch up. Use the global RPs provided to ramp up your industry, you're going to need it.

Automatic Scout Movement
Reduces the amount of work you have to do redirecting your scouts. The computer does a reasonable scheduling job, and I suggest you use this option always.

The Advanced Scenario

Several new factors come into play once you start to play the advanced scenario. Most important is the Industrial Technology R&D area. Since the population use more RPs the higher their social level, to the point where they are net consumers, you need to improve your productivity.

Take advantage of the increase in maximum population and industry when a planet's Social Level exceeds 80 – with industry at 200, population at 100 and social level 100, the output from a planet is 1450 RPs, of which the consumers take 400. That buys you 2 Mark IVs or a healthy 5 Mark IIIs. That more than doubles should you manage to reach Industrial Technology level IV, although at a cost of 6500 RPs, you will not often get there unless you manage to go a long time without being discovered. Level III is a must, however.

Scouts disappear in this scenario; don't worry, you won't miss them much, just build Mark 1 ships and use them to scout instead. At least they have a fighting chance of getting away from an occupied system. Anyway, ships are limited by your Navigational Technology level to travel within a (small) range from an occupied system. Remember to keep one or two ships in orbit around any star you have colonised: an enemy ship arriving will cause your system to be interdicted if there are no friendly ships in the neighbourhood. It can be hugely embarrassing if your economy is hamstrung by a rusty Mark 1 limping into view.

Don't neglect Planetary Defence Bases and Armies: they can save you from a nasty shock when the bad guys come calling and your main fleet's otherwise engaged. You may consider disbanding your armies in the first turn, to save on maintenance, but remember, if you should do so, to start building them back up once your economy starts to mature.

Navigational technology is a luxury early on, and you can go a whole game without ever reaching level III.

The Advanced Options

Enhanced Veterans
If you're ready for the Advanced game, you're ready for these guys. They add a bit of spice, being more adept at managing their economies, and at setting up and using their task forces. Don't be surprised when a massive fleet turns up on your doorstep!

Variable Victory Conditions
One of the most interesting variations. You may change the weighting given to the four VP types. The other players will do the same, and you'll only know what they selected at the end of the game. The weighting may range between 1 and 4. The easiest option is to go for 4 on the Economy VPs, especially in the Advanced game, when there is generally a long delay before the enemy find you. Be warned that the enhanced veterans in particular operate a 'hit the leader strategy', so don't neglect the R&D and shipbuilding. If you want a hard game, go for a weighting of 4 on Planetary Conquest, 2 on Colony Destruction and 1 on the other two. Warning – this is only for the severely masochistic.

Varying Movement Allowances
I can't see that this option makes a difference – computer-controlled enemies get an extra hex movement allowance whatever. It does, however, make for a faster game if you increase the movement allowance of transports.

Ships Costs
Unless you really want vast numbers of Mark IVs rushing about, I wouldn't bother with this option, although, as with the movement allowances, you can increase the speed of economic development by reducing the cost of colony transports.

Reach For The Stars is an old game: I recall playing an earlier version on the C64 six or seven years ago. As a multi-player game it still has the drawback of other players having to be out of view of the screen when moves are being entered. As a single player game, the computer opponents are excellent, neither too good or too bad. Until **Railroad Tycoon** came out (yes, I've caught the bug as well) it had been my favourite and most-returned to game on the PC for a couple of years. It still stands up to the strategy games on the market today, and deserves a wider audience. SF

NEXT ISSUE

STRATEGY
Battle Chess II

White Death

The Ancient Art of War At Sea

ADVENTURE
Buck Rogers

The Immortal

SIMULATIONS
Stormovik

Blue Max

PLUS PLUS PLUS

CAUGHT IN THE NET

by Max Matrix

I DON'T know about you, but Madame Tussauds gives me the creeps. All those dummies. I mean, who needs to go a museum to meet dummies when you spend most of your life surrounded by journalists?

The cause of my visit to the wacky world of wax was a party being held by the *charmant* French company, Infogrames. In true French style, the food was great and the music terrible. Unless, that is, your taste runs to seventies mediocre rock. I've heard better sounds coming from the bear pit.

Looking as cheerful as ever, though, was Sam Poole, *grande fromage* at Cinemaware. I tried to stop him telling me all the company secrets, but he wouldn't listen. The next 'TV Sports' release will be the baseball game, he confides, the legal dispute about which has now been resolved (see news story). 'We've put some things in this game you just won't believe,' he enthuses. 'There's so much detail, like when the batter raises his foot in preparation to strike, you can actually see the spikes on his shoes'.

'There's also going to be a lot of humour in the game,' he continues. According to Mirrorsoft, the humour in another Cinemaware game, **Rollerbabies**, got a bit *too* raunchy and had to be 'toned down'. The game itself is the usual Cinemaware hybrid of action and simulation but the subject matter is quite unique: Roller Derbies – a peculiarly American 'sport' featuring young ladies of varying dimensions whirring around a skating rink doing unspeakble things to each other. The adjacent dummies started melting even as Sam was describing it.

Some of you may have noticed that the lunatic who edits this mag wrote a piece on soccer management games for *The Grauniad* recently. In the midst of his rant he speculated that the only hope for a good game on the subject was for an American company to pick up the ball. 'We're working on one right now,' says Sam the supremo who is now anything but tight lipped. 'We don't have a firm release date yet, but **TV Sports Soccer** won't be long off'. Even from the confines of the Chamber of Horrors, I can hear the excited rattling of the editorial cage as this news is imparted.

Trying not to scare off too many of the guests, I decide to keep a low profile in the Mirrorsoft hospitality suite. Not low enough, though, to avoid the eagle eye of the ebullient Gilman Louie, Commnader-in-Chief at super sim company Spectrum Holobyte. It appears that Gilman has able to persuade programmer Alan '**Action Stations**' Zimm to work on **Pearl Harbour** – a simulation to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the infamous attack, due to be launched next summer.

'Alan just knows everything there is to know about ships,' Gilman tells me. 'I saw him working on **Action Stations** and I told him: "Alan, you need more graphics, more graphics." He was surrounded by all these incredible charts – really unbelievable.' We got to talking about Microprose and their decision to publish **Railroad Tycoon**. 'Wild' Bill Stealey had reservations about doing the game, I tell him. 'Sure, it didn't have wings. I heard he wanted to put machine guns on the trains,' says Gilman with a grin as wide as the Pacific Ocean.

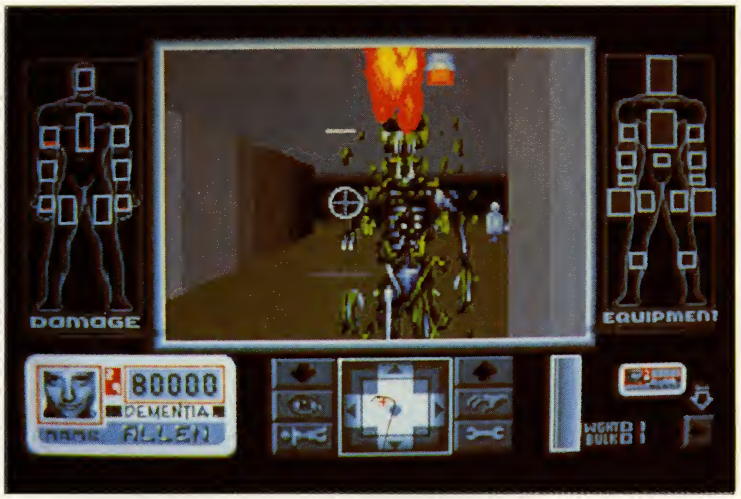
Can anyone explain the logic behind computer **Subbuteo**? Is this not one of the most pointless products of all time, or what? As the proud owner of an Astroturf pitch and a Dukla Prague away kit I bow to no one in my love of the game, but how can a computer simulate crashing into the drinks cabinet when racing around the dining room table trying to prevent a breakaway goal? Maybe I'm prejudiced, after all, the game *is* published by a company called Electronic Zoo. Stop Press: I take back all I said. I've just heard of a new game called **Jockey Wilson's Darts**! Nuts to that.

Last year it was the Battle of the Subs (winner: **688**), this year it's the Battle of the Skies circa 1914. First out of the hangar is **Wings** *(reviewed this issue – Ed)*. Coming your way soon will be **Red Baron** from Sierra (née Dynamix), **Knights of the Sky** from Microprose, **Blue Max** from Three-Sixty. Does this mean that great minds think alike, or is there simply a dearth of original ideas around? Either way, the impending conflict between the ex 'Great Satan' and (sudden) B-Movie villain, Saddam Hussein, must be warming the hearts of many games designers. Already Microprose are rumoured to be inserting an Iraqi scenario in **UMS 2**. SP

CORPORATION

Keeping Bad Company

by Maurice Thomas



CORPORATION owes much in conception to the *Neuromancer/Blade Runner* view of the future, with passing nods to *Robocop* and the **Traveller** pencil and paper rolegame. It is set in a future where cybernetics and prosthetics are run-of-the-mill, and where genetic engineering is a common science. As a ZODIAC agent, you have to invade the headquarters of the huge Universal Cybernetics Corporation, and find proof for your masters of the Corporation's dabbling in artificial life-form research. On your way you come up against all manner of mechanical and biological terrors, and have to negotiate stroppy lifts, computer terminals and the like.

3-D View

Your interface to this future hell is a well laid out screen, the centrepiece of which is a 3-D viewport displaying what you can see. The programme is entirely mouse driven, and a sophisticated icon system allows you to pick up and drop objects, tinker with them, mend them, fire them at eight foot robots and so on. There are damage readouts for both yourself and your gear, and the equipment you are carrying is displayed pictorially rather than as an unhelpful inventory.

You start the game by selecting one of six characters – two men, two women and two robots – and equipping your chosen person with a variety of snacky gadgets and life-saving drugs. The whole gamut of the **Traveller** rule book is explored here, from ablative armour and blasters to jet packs and self-administering medi-kits. You have a certain amount of cash to spend, and must spend it wisely; it is all very well cruising around the first level in powered armour with giga-blaster and jet-pack aflame, but you won't be able to pick any locks, use any computers, or quench your raging thirst.

Progress within the game is by no means easy, and it requires persistence and the willingness to experiment with combinations of kit to achieve. You should expect to 'die' a lot before you get anywhere, but the rewards in terms of new levels and even more fiendish opponents are worth the effort. It is by no means a zap bang pow game; there are plenty of quiet side rooms in which you can rest and take stock, and a reasonable level of thought is required for you to negotiate the pitfalls.

Giger Counter

The graphics are clear and inventive – at close range the sprites often fill the viewscreen – and there are elements of surprise built in that actually make you jump. The robots and so forth are much as you would expect, though I especially like the various mutant life-forms that occasionally pop up: very *Alien*-esque with lots of tentacles and dribbly mandibles. I feel more could have been done in the way of music – the title sequence is well paced and highly atmospheric, but after that there is no music as such; just boom and crash effects which, though good, could have been augmented by a continuous soundtrack.

Aside form this quibble, though, the game reeks of loving care and attention, as if the programmers really cared about their project. You are never left feeling 'ho-hum' or any such, and there are a number of nice touches which carry the game for me. The best of these is the enrolment feature, whereby you can send the programmers your passport photo and details of yourself, and they'll send back a character disk of 'you' for use in the game. A novel idea, and very tempting. The categories for hobbies are a little odd, though – Model Making, Martial Arts, Stamp Collecting and Train Spotting. maybe the programmers know something about computer games that I don't. Then again... SP

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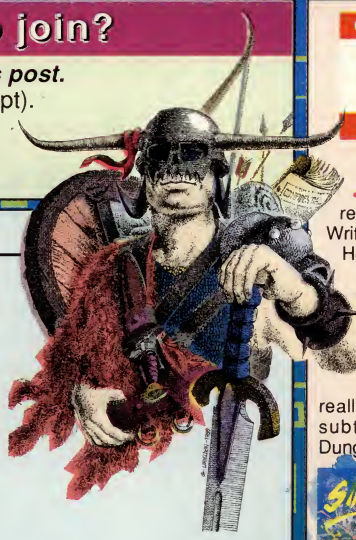

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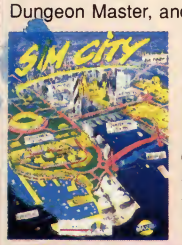

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One of the many souls reaches the ground. He removes a small coin from beneath his tongue. The soul gets up and heads north toward the wooded

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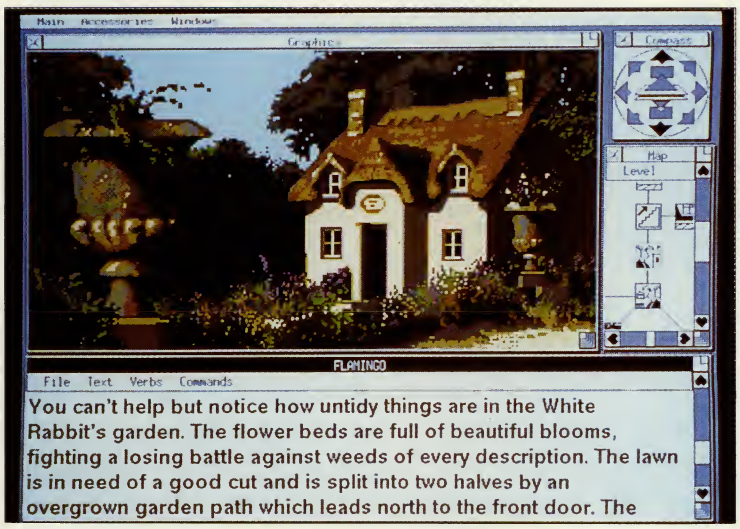
WONDERLAND

Alice Takes A Trip

by Theo Clarke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You can't help but notice how untidy things are in the White Rabbit's garden. The flower beds are full of beautiful blooms, fighting a losing battle against weeds of every description. The lawn is in need of a good cut and is split into two halves by an overgrown garden path which leads north to the front door. The

Designed by
David Bishop/
Magnetic Scrolls

Published by
Virgin Mastertronic

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IF ANY game has had a big build-up, **Wonderland** has to be that game. The design skill of David Bishop, Anita Sinclair's famous programming team from Magnetic Scrolls and the marketing skills of Virgin Mastertronic are a powerful combination.

People have been talking about **Wonderland** all year and anyone who saw any phase of its development came back glowing with excitement. All this wild enthusiasm ran contrary to my innate wariness of any adaptation of a children's classic; Tenniel's famous illustrations went some way towards assuaging these fears. But the big question is: can the game live up to the advance hype? The big answer is a resounding 'YES!'

The game engine is entirely based upon windows technology. Windows are just boxes on the screen. Each window has its own function and can change size, shape and position to match the player's personal preference. Some windows contain small stylised images that represent objects or actions. This flexible environment is very appealing. The new player will spend some time just tinkering with the position of the various windows and getting acquainted with the power of the interface.

The perfect adventure game engine would allow the player to devote all their energy to solving the puzzles set by the designer rather than those introduced by the programmer. This Magnetic Scrolls interface is very close to that ideal. The parser is excellent. It is robust and it provides useful error messages. The auto-mapping option provides a means of moving rapidly around the explored areas as well as eliminating one of the least popular chores of adventuring.

There are other tools to reduce the administration needed by the player. An 'inventory' window shows all of the items being carried by Alice. Clicking on any of these icons brings up a list of possible actions associated with it; Get, Open, Examine and search are common verbs in the list. The 'items in room' window has a similar function and dragging icons between the two windows gets, or drops the item, depending upon the final position of the icon.

Type You'll Like

Typing is popularly held to be the bane of adventure gamers but it must be recognised that it provides a flexibility impossible with a pure point and click interface. Magnetic Scrolls provide both approaches with their new engine but it is impossible to complete the game without occasional keyboard use. Many significant clues would be missed if the text window was hidden by the player. It is possible to turn off all of the graphics elements and run as a pure text adventure, however.

With the early Magnetic Scrolls games there were static images associated with most of the individual locations. The very name of the company comes from the flourish at the bottom of these images. In games like **The Pawn** it was possible to adjust the height of the graphics section by moving the scroll. This was regarded with great respect at the time, but is now blown into antiquity by the ability to change the size and shape of the graphic images that illustrate **Wonderland**. And what a feast these images are. There are over one hundred locations in the adventure. Each of these is illustrated and many of the pictures animated. The caterpillar puffs gently on his hookah. The musical chairs dance as the piano notes move and music plays.

The music is less pervasive. There are just six locations with a theme tune and although the tunes are pleasant melodies it is clear that music was not considered to be an essential. It is far preferable to have appropriate moments such as these rather than the relentlessly trite cyclic sounds that accompany some adventures. Some witty sound effects, however, would have been a useful addition. The manual is a clear guide to all of the facilities of the game engine. It explains how text can be cut and pasted from the text descriptions of the locations. It also warns the player about potentially disconcerting events – like the game engine automatically closing down most of the windows, so that it can load some of the larger graphic images (such as the heavily animated sequence of the footman calling at the Duchess's house to deliver an invitation).

A poster of the box cover art is included in the package but the real gem is the pictorial map of Wonderland by Dermott Powers. This, and the auto-map window, can be used to deduce how much of the game has been explored at any time.

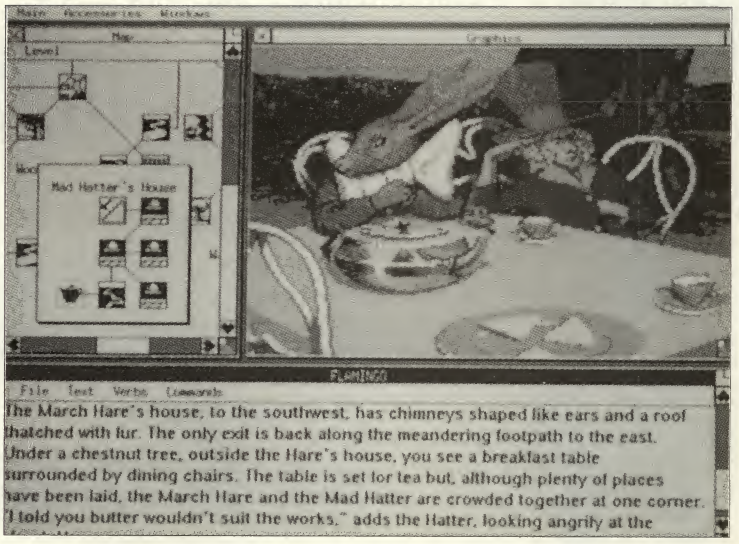
On Location

The game opens with Alice reading on the riverbank with her sister. The text of the opening is that of the original book. The very words themselves are displayed in a serif typeface reminiscent of classic storybooks. A white rabbit trots by, and if

Alice chooses to follow him down his burrow the adventure begins. Nothing that Alice does is fatal, but some mistakes will cause her to wake up. It is also possible to trap her irrevocably in some locations.

It is not necessary to have read the book to enjoy the game, but a familiarity with the story will simplify some of the problems. Encounters with familiar characters from childhood have a special charm. Who could forget the effects of a bottle labelled 'drink me', or the significance of a smile in a tree? Some of the problems are quite challenging, so overall there is a huge amount of activity needed to complete the adventure. David Bishop reckons that he can run through the entire game scoring all 501 points in about six hours, but believes that it would take over sixty hours for a new player to complete the entire puzzle.

Some problems have more than one valid solution, while certain objects are needed to solve more than one problem. However, the bewildered player can resort to the excellent on- line help. The system logs the amount of help requested and displays this with the score, but any adventurer knows that overuse of such a facility only robs the player of their own fun. The **Wonderland** help system avoids the common pitfall of prematurely warning the player of the existence of problems. It also provides solutions as a series of hints, rather than dishing up the full answer at the slightest request.


Mad Hatter's House
FLAMINGO
The March Hare's house, to the southwest, has chimneys shaped like ears and a roof thatched with fur. The only exit is back along the meandering footpath to the east. Under a chestnut tree, outside the Hare's house, you see a breakfast table surrounded by dining chairs. The table is set for tea but, although plenty of places have been laid, the March Hare and the Mad Hatter are crowded together at one corner. "I told you butter wouldn't suit the works," adds the Hatter, looking angrily at the

The object of the game is to gather playing cards to form the jury at the trial of the Knave of Hearts. The trial is the game's grand finale – an animated *tour de force* as the witnesses on either side stand and gesticulate to emphasise their points. The details of the trial depend upon the player's activities throughout the game so no two endings should be the same. David Bishop has said that he will design an *Alice Through the Looking Glass* sequel if this game is successful. His caution seems remarkable. If the purchasing public has any sense at all the sales should be brisk enough to ensure a rapid start to this project. Magnetic Scrolls hopes to maintain their enthusiasm with a budget trilogy of **Corruption**, **Fish**, and **Guild Of Thieves** converted to the **Wonderland** engine.

Don't get too excited, however. **Wonderland** is so exciting that it may turn out to be dream. SP

This review was based on the 1.15 version and conducted on the premises of Virgin Mastertronic. The final version is expected to be the 1.16

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TIME MACHINE

One Flew Over The Cuckoo Clock

by John Scott

THE IDEA behind **Time Machine** is as old as H G Wells and as modern as *Back To The Future III*. The hero, one Professor Potts, is an awkward, untidy, mad scientist who has a single obsession – to travel through time and space. A very brief introductory cartoon shows Prof Potts working on his time machine outside his lab, when he suddenly becomes the victim of a terrorist attack. One of these nasty people lobs a grenade which damages the time machine (well, it would, wouldn't it?) and Potts is thrown into a time warp.

The game then begins with the Prof standing in a strange land of swamps and volcanos, where odd looking monkeys are beginning to come out of the trees. He has gone ten million years into the past, and his only weapon is a controller device which produces a limited burst of electrical energy. This can be used to stun or kill creatures and dislodge objects, but if overused it will need time to recharge itself.

Wide Scopes

The overall objective is quite simple – Potts must interfere with evolution to find a way back to the future (pun intended). For example, he must first locate a home for his cute furry ancestors and find some way to cool down their volcanic planet. Only then will he be able to jump to time zone 2, an ice age, where he must keep his now considerably larger relatives warm while trying to avoid being beaten to death by them. In the next era it will be necessary to help a particularly stupid neanderthal to invent the wheel, then there is oil to be discovered, and so on, until he arrives back in his own era just in time to foil the terrorist raid which started the whole thing, and so rescue the time machine.

Most of the screen is devoted to showing Potts current location. The graphics are quite nice, adequate, but nothing special. You waggle the joystick to get the hero to move around the screen, hopefully avoiding volcano blasts, objects falling from trees, and trying not to fall into the river or swamp. Avoiding the attacks of violent pre-humans provided what was, for me, the major frustration factor of the game. A control panel at the top of the screen gives vital information about how you're doing. It's easy to figure out what all the symbols mean once you've played the game a few times, and this is just as well, since the manual doesn't mention the damn thing at all! Information on this panel includes the number of lives Potts has remaining, and a viewing window. This window doesn't really give you a closer look at any object, but when Potts bumps into something that he can manipulate there is an audible signal and the object appears in the window. This is how you know that you have come across something you can actually use. The screen display also includes a gauge to show how much power is in your electrical controller, and a grid of five rows and five columns.

This grid represents the five time zones and the five locations in each zone. At first only level one, the prehistoric, is available. A sector where everything is OK will show green on the grid, impending trouble means that the area will flash yellow, and red means a real problem to be solved.

Forebear or Forbear

A marker on the grid indicates the position of the Prof, and also the position of each of four teleport devices he initially has in his possession. These devices enable him to jump around in both time and space. This teleporting around is quite vital, since not only do the time zones have to be created, but they must also be maintained. Previous zones will continue to evolve on their own and be changed by their inhabitants. You must therefore protect the course of evolution in earlier zones and so care for your forebears – if they become extinct, so will you!

Additionally an event in a time zone may evolve in a subsequent zone – a seed planted in one zone may grow into a tree which can be used in a later time period.

So that's the basic idea. Now, is it any good? I suppose it really depends what you're looking for. The description 'A 4-D Fantasy Role-Playing Arcade Adventure' is obviously designed to appeal to as many potential purchasers as possible, but while it succeeds as an over-the-top piece of publisher's hype, it's a far from accurate description of the game. For example, there is nothing here that a role-play gamer would recognize as role play – no character generation and so on. This game can only be called role play in that you control the actions of Prof Potts. This criteria means that probably 98% of all games are role-play games! I think not... **Time Machine** is role play in the same sense that the *Star Wars* arcade game is role play.

I think that in their attempt to provide a game that will please everyone the designers have fallen between two stools and merely produced an oddity that will have very little lasting appeal for anyone. Arcade fans will find the game lacking in arcade variety and playability. Adventurers will soon solve the puzzles, tire of zapping the opposition, and conclude that it is definitely more arcade than adventure (it even has a high score table). Positively not a game to hold the interest for very long. SP

Designed by
Vivid Image and Lisa Wand

Published by
Activision

Price £24.99

Available for the Amiga and ST
Reviewed on the Amiga

KING'S BOUNTY

Search For The Dragon

by Theo Clarke

MAXIMUS, King of the Four Continents, lies dying. The Sceptre of Order has been stolen by the dragon Arech Dragonbreath and the loss has blighted his kingdom. Any self-respecting ruler would call in a hero under such circumstances. Maximus is no exception.

Arech is so disconcerted by this that he has buried the sceptre and cut the treasure map into twenty five pieces. He has given a fragment to each of his sixteen followers and kept one for himself. He then placed each of the remaining eight with a magical artefact which will come in very handy for any passing hero – a decision that does little to enhance one's opinion of dragon intellect.

In Continents

The hero starts at Maximus's castle on the continent of Continentia. This continent accommodates the weakest villains and monsters. It also holds a treasure chest containing a map which enables the hero to travel to the next continent. Each successive continent holds tougher competition; much like the successively deeper levels of the dungeons in early fantasy role-playing games.

The player can choose to be a knight, a paladin, a sorceress or a barbarian. This choice determines the hero's initial wealth, magical aptitude and the ability to command loyalty. The player also selects one of four deadlines within which to recover the sceptre.

Open The Box

The geography of the Four Continents is constant. Each continent fits tightly into a 60 by 60 square grid and the coordinates of all the castles and towns are known at the outset. The number of villains, artifacts, treasure chests and wandering armies is also the same in every game but their disposition is random across fixed locations.

In essence the game consists of the hero wandering around the four continents opening treasure chests, fighting monsters, recruiting followers and besieging cities until enough map fragments have been recovered to support a guess as to the location of the Sceptre.

Played at this level of analysis **King's Bounty** is rather dull, and a superficial reading of the rules followed by a rapid entry into the game will reinforce this perception.

Ponderous Maximus

At each town it is possible to pick up information about a castle. The identity of the villain commanding the castle, and the approximate strength of the garrison can be used to decide which castles to beseige. The composition of wandering armies is apparent before the hero chooses to enter combat and it is always possible to avoid a battle if the player has not backed into a corner. This information is important because the player loses a point for every loyal creature that dies in combat and only gains points for capturing villains. The trick is to assure rapid victory by establishing a massive superiority before launching any attack. Every victory yields a cash prize that can be used to buy magic spells, siege weapons or reinforcements.

Combat is not very sophisticated in that it owes much to the table top wargames that were the basis of early fantasy role-playing games. Different creatures have different numbers of hit points and movement points. They inflict a random degree of damage within fixed limits. The penalty for breaking off combat is the loss of the hero's entire army and an ignominious return to Maximus's castle. Such retreats only become worthwhile if defeat is inevitable. Defeat has the same result but the player loses more points.

King's Bounty is the prototype of a very good game. Its only serious flaws are the cumbersome combat system and the amount of time spent getting from place to place. The unadventurous graphics and the near total lack of sound are not significant problems, but the ponderous mechanics will defeat most players long before King Maximus regains his sceptre. SP

Designed by
Jon Van Caneghem

Published by
New World
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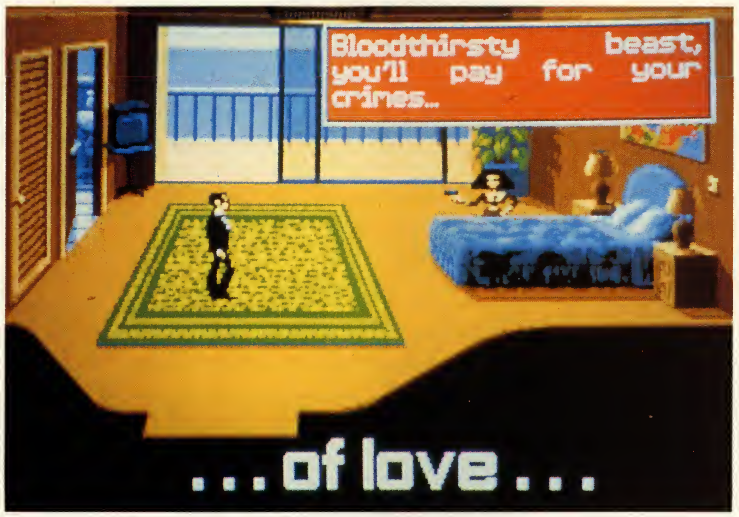
OPERATION STEALTH

The Spy Who Mugged Me

by Maurice Thomas



FOLLOWING on from, and greatly improving upon, the **Future Wars** adventure, we have this tale of spying puzzle solving and Central American destabilisation. In it you play a secret agent trying to recover a missing Stealth Fighter (perhaps it was never there in the first place) from the clutches of the evil General Manigua.

You are Agent DSC3 John Glames, an upper middle class West Pointer who is, according to the blurb, a master of Ninjutsu and virtually everything that James Bond ever turned his hand to; he also wears a little animated tux and bow tie.

The briefing at the start is one of the highlights of the game; you and your boss have a conversation about the missing aircraft, and he issues you with a briefcase filled with gadgets. The dialogue at this point is so reminiscent of Fry and Laurie that I found it difficult to play the rest of the game:

'Now, this is a Stealth Fighter, Tony...'

'Oh, is that what it is, Control?'

'Yes it is, Tony. And they're very expensive.'

Prime Stuff

Notwithstanding the rather naff level of dialogue, and occasional regrettable translation errors – references to the Prime Minister of America, for example – **Operation Stealth** is high quality stuff. The ease of operation remains from **Future Wars** days, and all of the glitches that beset **Future Wars** seem to have been ironed out. The layout of screens is clear, and the character 'sprites' are believable, with decent arms and legs – no people walking like Bod in this game.

I find the whole 'Cinématique' concept appealing, and in this game it is well implemented. The package is purely mouse driven, and you move your figure around the various background screens, interacting with other denizens of the game, using a variety of gadgets, and taking unbelievable risks in his quest to keep the world safe from Communism. Everything about the game has a certain neatness: message are clear, it is obvious when you can or cannot use an item or operate machinery, and you will always 'see' everything you need if a puzzle presents itself.

Attention has also been given to game architecture. Disk swaps are few and far between, and transition between scenes is largely swift. The one exception to this is a rather strange six minute animated sequence two thirds of the way through; during that time you can do nothing, nor is there any opportunity to hurry the thing along once you have seen it several times. The pictures are pretty, and the music just about keeps you awake, but the 'vital information' conveyed in the sequence takes about 10 seconds to absorb.

Chair Throwing

On the whole, though, the graphics and music are both executed to a high standard. There is sufficient variety in the game to hold interest beyond the norm,and though it did at times arouse my frustration and anger, a more patient and charitable soul could well say that it was challenging and absorbing. I certainly played it for six hours at a sitting a couple of times, even though I was hurling plant pots and chairs across the room while doing it. SP

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Reviewed on the Amiga

EGA, VGA

Roland and AdLib soundboards supported

CLUED UP

by
Professor Plum

BARD'S TALE II

The fifth word of the ten on level four of Dargoth's Tower is a bit of a humdinger to find isn't it? Actually, it's in the dark area, in a small room, where the 'stairs up' are located. Watch those spinners and persevere. Yes, I know – sometimes I wanted to persevere the game right through the window too, but that's another story.

BARD'S TALE III

If you're having trouble obtaining a rainbow rose in Lucencia have you seen anything else which may have been rainbow coloured? Zer is a connection. For those of you having problems handing out flowers, the bard's song at the hall might help.

DRAGON WARS

If you must start with a new team take a look at the pre-generated lot. They have been carefully selected with well implemented skill selection. Take note. For goodness' sake do not, what ever you do, transfer characters from old **Bard's Tale** character disks. They will always be worse off in the new Dragon Wars scenario.

KING'S QUEST IV

Can't safely exit the Ogre's hut, eh? Well, I'm sorry to say that this sequence is purely random. So keep trying, folks. Oh, by the way, the shovel can only be used five times and then it breaks so use it with care. She obviously shops at my local DIY shop.

LEISURE SUIT LARRY II

Having trouble with a, er, 'full' bikini top and KGB spies? Ahem, well if you managed to grab an object from the guest room – this may be of some use in the Jungle.

M1 TANK PLATOON

Don't forget, your support elements are expendable – so use them! The air, artillery and infantry can turn a battle for you if used correctly. Use smoke early and often – it gives you instant cover, especially over flat terrain. Be careful when using artillery support though. They will fire at a target until their 'mission' is complete and so they are not as mobile as you may wish. Therefore, don't rely on them to provide 'covering fire'. It is far better to utilise artillery off-map to hit a nasty looking position you'll come across later, for example.

MANHUNTER

Quite a few people out there appear to be having trouble finding the fourth module. You have to find out 'the' name and enter it into the MAD. This should lead you into the computer which is more than just a pretty face – heh, heh.

NEUROMANCER

This classic cyberpunk Sierra'em-up should be available on the Amiga as you read this. Anyone having problems with Greystoke (besides trying to stop him swinging through the trees – no, no, just a joke) should consider leaving him till later on in the game. You'll need the heavy duty Black & Deckers before he can be vanquished so just back off, OK?

OPERATION STEALTH

There's no point buying flowers unless you want to wear them. When you're in between a rock and a hard place, look under your nose to pick a way out. When all about you are getting shot and blaming it on you, run like hell or you will be arrested, my son.

SECOND FRONT

A wee bit of advice for this masterly piece of programming from the lads at SSI. Playing the Germans I have had success using the very first battle plan presented by General Marcks on August 5 1941.

Basically this entails a 'two blow' idea. .Give limited flank cover towards the river Dvina and Leningrad in the north, while striking a second blow, south, towards Kiev. The most powerful surge should strike through the centre towards Moscow. Do not try to capture Leningrad with the first push and resist the temptation of immediately hitting Stalingrad in the south. It will only end in tears.

SENTINEL WORLDS 1

Mining is not worth the effort. Chugging around in your ATV to pick up three types of ore takes valuable time and effort. Silly really as it brings little dosh for your labour. When boarding ships don't forget to use projectile weapons and then raid the armory which is always in the same place. Grab the haul (especially the tessalator) and then sell the lot. Incidently, the strange items such as arisian lense and holophones may be pretty but they're pretty useless too. Sell them.

The Battlestation is causing all kinds of confusion, mayhem, mental agony and frustration, sounds like a good game doesn't it?

The first level has three different room configurations which are repeated throughout the level. So even if you think you are walking around in circles – you're not really, well probably not, anyway. Each level is nine rooms wide by eight rooms high. So the area is mappable. Get the trusty graph paper out. Oh, and use a long range scanner for co-ordinates.

TYPHOON OF STEEL

A little bit of help in this deep, if rather slow, wargame from the lads at SSI. Sometimes the Japanese, instead of routing, call upon the ol' Banzai tactic. When this happens to you turn massive indirect fire upon them and then hit them with small arms fire. Always make sure that you have a few squads taking good advantage of cover and concealment specifically for the 'Banzai' tactic.

ULTIMA V

Food is a big problem at the start of the game, mainly because stealing is a no-no. The only thing for it is to keep your party small, initially, and sell non-essential items. You could hang around bridges and take a stroll at night to find a few monsters to kill. Have your most intelligent character do the buying and selling. If there are any beginners out there who still can't find the dungeons, look in the mountains for little piles of boulders.

Remember the co-ordinates given by the Demon for the Shard of Hatred? Yes that Demon. Well they're wrong – you know what demons are like. You may have trekked to that very location and found a few grains of dust but not much else. The secret is to go down Covetous to the underworld, walk south to the mountains and then head off westward. That should put you on the right track, at least. Use a few gems while you're there, to see what's around.

WASTELAND

The 'copter is only a one-off ride, you'll need high agility to fly it too. Then again, as you can walk anywhere you wish is it really necessary? Sorry, but you won't be able to enter Darwin Base until you've visited Sleeper Base, which mean you'll have to travel the sewers. SP

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Microprose applies golden touch to space adventure

When **Elite** was launched in 1984 it was quickly regarded as a classic in its own time. Now Microprose has upgraded the original CGA graphics to EGA and VGA, as well as adding support for the Roland soundboard.

Further improvements include more elaborate documentation, star maps, and an identification guide. **Elite Gold** will be available on the Rainbird label at the end of 1990 for the PC.

Another space simulation game from Microprose is **Starlord**, which has been programmed by Maelstrom Games, the company that developed **Midwinter**.

Starlord is based on a play-by-mail game designed and operated by Mike Singleton in the early 1980s. Up to 15 human players can participate in **Starlord** or as few as one human player and 14 computer players. **Starlord** will be available on all formats. There's no firm release date.

Yet another space game from Microprose is **Lightspeed**, which takes place in a future where Earth has lost its ability to support human life *(believed to be 1992 – Ed)*. **Lightspeed** requires the player to search for a planet that can serve as a new home for the human race.

Go fly a kite: biplane battles with the Baron in Knights of the Air.

The game features elements of simulation and role-playing, and allows the player to control how much of each he wants in the game. **Lightspeed** will be available for the PC at the end of this year.

Microprose is, of course, best known for its flight sims, and with **Knights of the Sky** it really seems to have surpassed itself.

Instead of navigating by computer, pilots in the game have a compass and a map. Locations are charted by observing the roads, rivers and other landmarks below them, just as First World War pilots did. **Knights of the Sky** will support all sound modes and almost every graphic mode. Available at the end of this year for the PC.

Moving into a new area, Microprose is to release **Covert Action**, a realistic contemporary spy simulation dealing with such topics as drug smuggling, terrorism, and international intrigue. Players create a male or female character and will be able to select three geographical areas of the world in which the case unfolds. **Covert Action** will support EGA and VGA graphics as well as AdLib and Roland soundboards. No firm release date as yet.

In **Command HQ** players compete in First, Second or even future World Wars as supreme commander of their military forces. When a battle commences, all the action is seen through detailed, colourful animations on the game screen. **Command HQ** will support EGA, VGA graphics plus the AdLib and Roland soundboards. No firm release date.

Despite what you may have read in other magazines, **MegaTraveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy** will not be released by Microprose, though it will be available from Entertainment International next April.

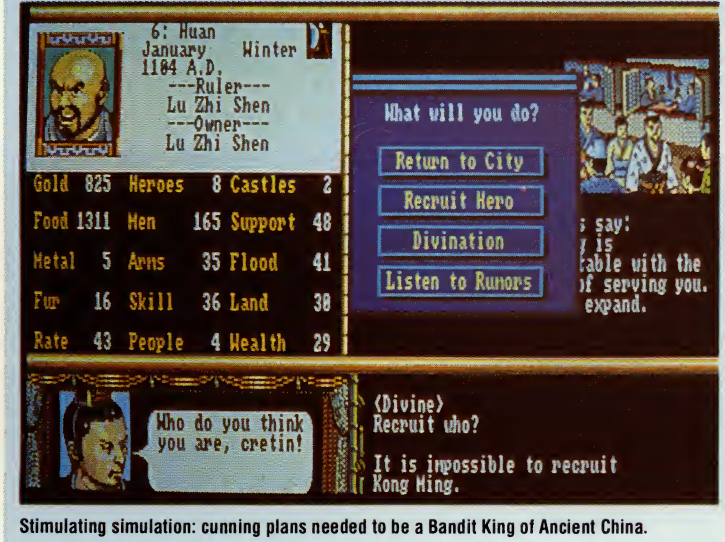
French marauders

Ambitious French company Infogrames has a whole *baquet* of new releases. First off is likely to be **Murders In Space**, a detective adventure set in the year 2005.

Great news for strategy players is that Infogrames is to release **Genghis Khan** and **Bandit Kings of Ancient China**.

These games have been available for some time in Japan and in the US where they have acquired a high reputation among strategy gamers.

Both games are historical simulations which can accommodate multiple players. Available for the Amiga and PC later this year.



Stimulating simulation: cunning plans needed to be a Bandit King of Ancient China.

BITS

One of the big surprises of the European Computer Entertainment Show was the announcement by Ocean, best known for its arcade games, that it is to release Sim Earth, the follow-up to the highly acclaimed Sim City. No firm release date was announced, but next April looks to be the favourite. Another game from Ocean which may interest Strategy Plus readers is Battle Command, an arcade strategy game which takes up where Carrier Command left off.

Good news for fans of the Arthurian legends: Virgin is to release Spirit of Excalibur, which takes up where John Boorman's film left off. The game is programmed by the same team which created War in Middle-earth. Spirit of Excalibur should be available on all formats from January.

Zon of a gun: the Omnicron Conspiracy thickens (left). Right: heavyweight heffalump hot-rods ready to race for the Raj.

Powered up to beat drugs

Omnicron Conspiracy is due out any day now on Mirrorsoft's Imagework's label. As Captain Ace Powers you have to bust an intergalactic drugs ring which will take you right across a strange universe in your quest to solve the case which will secure your future.

Omnicron Conspiracy is set in a huge galaxy populated by some of the strangest aliens you'll ever meet outside of Yorkshire. Available on all formats in November.

Also on the Imageworks label is **Champions of the Raj**, set in colonial India during the early 1800s. This is a strategy game for up to six players competing against each other, though there are several 'evocative' arcade sequences including a tiger hunt and elephant race. The game is programmed by Level 9, previously known for its text adventures.

Coming soon on the PSS label is **Reach For The Skies – The Battle of Britain 1940**. The player has the choice of being the British controller, the German controller, or a pilot on either side. The missions given to the pilots are the actual missions fought

Accolade for a girl with monstrous hits

A software conversion of **Stratego**, the classic boardgame, will be available from Accolade at the end of October.

The game will feature a computer opponent able to play on five different levels of ability; three game boards – original, classic and modern; a library of initial battle formations; traditional and tournament rules; single or five battle campaigns; digitised sounds; on screen help and strategy tips. Available for the PC, other formats to follow shortly.

Available from November will be **Altered Destiny**, an animated graphic adventure featuring more than 90 animated screens, a soundtrack with more than 25 songs, multiple layers of puzzles and solutions, intelligent parser that recognises more than 1500 words and allows you to communicate in full sentences.

Altered Destiny supports VGA plus AdLib, CMS and Roland soundboards.

Elvira – Mistress of the Dark will be released on all formats in November.

Game features include more than 100 hours of game play, 800 different locations including mazes, battlements, catacombs and Elvira's heaving bosoms. Other noticeable points are real-time combat, dozens of magic spells and a point and click interface.

Diogenes digs in

Although best known for its highly stylised arcade games, Psygnosis is finally about to release a strategy game.

Carthage is a combination of arcade action and strategy where the player takes the role of Diogenes, Carthaginian garrison commander and expert charioteer.

The object of **Carthage** is to maintain a fiscal balance through fair distribution of wealth. Failure to do so will result in less money becoming available for the purpose of building armies.

Features include fractal maps of North Africa, randomly generated Roman attack forces, and an easy to use interface.

Storm in action

Having already released the acclaimed **Action Stations!, White Death** and **Blitzkrieg '41** on its Internecine label, Storm is to release a space naval wargame, **Worlds at War.** Also due from this progressive company is a First World War version of **Action Stations!**

Impressive Blitzkrieg

Impressions is to release a number of strategy games on its Plato label. First off is likely to be **Blitzkrieg May 1940**, a highly detailed strategic simulation of this historic episode.

Blitzkrieg was programmed by Ken Wright, whose previous work includes such classics as **Overlord**. Available on the ST and Amiga any time now.

The Final Conflict is a simulation of 'your worst nightmare', or alternatively of power politics and global warfare. Although primarily a strategy game, **The Final Conflict** includes an arcade sub-game which is (mercifully) optional.

Fighting spirit: Dutch courage enters into Reach for the Skies

during the course of the battle and include bombing targets and intercepting enemy aircraft. Available on all formats any time now.

Lord of the Rings fans will be thrilled to hear that **Riders of Rohan** will soon be appearing on the PSS label. Described as a strategy wargame with a twist, **Riders of Rohan** will have numerous sub-games and several arcade sequences. This is to be the first release in a planned series based on Tolkien's trilogy.

New from Spectrum Holobyte is the Electronic Battlefield System (EBS) which has been described as 'the most important development in the strategy and simulation world'. All products released by Spectrum Holobyte from **Tank** onwards will all be based on the same battlefield. This means that, via a modem link, two players can jointly control the same battlefield scenario, with one taking care of the ground offensive, and the other commanding the aerial attack, for example.

The release of **Falcon** (version 3) later this year will bring this classic game into the EBS fold. Subsequent releases lined up to operate within the EBS framework include **A-10 Tank Killer**.

EBS has the potential for wider use with a networking system whereby up to 30 people can log onto a network.

On the much-loved Cinemaware label comes the conversion of **TV Sports Basketball** for the PC (this month) and the Atari ST (in the New Year).

Amiga users' long wait for the sequel to **Dungeon Master** is nearing an end with the news that **Chaos Strikes Back** will be released this winter for the Amiga (1 meg only).

'Nam invites unlikely move

Another unlikely company moving into the strategy arena is Domark, which plans to release **'Nam 1965-1975**, a unique simulation of the Vietnam war written by Matthew Stibbe.

There are two aspects to **'Nam** – political and military – both of which have to be finely balanced if you want to succeed. There are four scenarios which can be played independently, or there are two campaign scenarios where you take the roles of Presidents Nixon and Johnson. **'Nam** will be released on all formats in the new year.

Also from Domark comes **MiG-29 Fulcrum** – the Soviet Union's most advanced front line attack aircraft.

The game comes with seven missions, several of which have highly original victory conditions. There are, for example, reconnaissance flights where the objective is *not* to engage the enemy.

MiG-29 was developed with the co-operation of TASS, the Soviet news agency, and programmed by Simis – ex-British Aerospace. The game should be available on all formats in December.

In addition to its own products, Domark announced the release of a number of the highly regarded games produced by Brøderbund for the IBM PC.

Four adventures featuring Carmen Sandiego are likely to be the first of these releases. These are puzzle games as opposed to adventure games.

Also from Brøderbund comes **The Ancient Art of War** and **The Ancient Art of War At Sea**.

These are not new games, but EGA upgrades of the original CGA versions.

Accent on evil: a bacterial threat in severe need of Listerine

Bat pack

French company Ubisoft is to open an office in the UK, so watch out for **BAT**, a role-playing adventure set in the 22nd century.

BAT (Bureau of Astral Troubleshooters) has to solve a mystery involving Vrangor, an evil genius who, together with his accomplice Merigo, is threatening the people of Selenia. Unless they leave the planet, Vrangor will destroy them with bacterial warheads and his funny accent. The player has to ruin his plans by eliminating him (and his accent) and restoring peace to the universe.

101 things to do with a dead chicken – none of them useful here?

Monkey business

Strategy Plus's resident gossip columnist will no doubt be interested in **The Secret of Monkey Island**, a new release from Lucasfilms.

This comedy adventure is set in the golden age of piracy in the Caribbean. Graphics and storyline promise to be up to the high standard which we've come to expect from this company. PC version next month.

Also new from Lucasfilms is **The Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe** – a mission-building game which recreates the US 8th Air Force campaign to cripple the industrial might of the nasty Nazis. The game also offers a 'what if' option, in this instance positing a scenario where Germany had advanced weapons as a result of superior research.

Both games will arrive on the PC next month, with versions for the Amiga and ST due to follow in the New Year.

As if this wasn't enough, Lucasfilms is releasing **Night Shift**, an arcade adventure that features characters from previous games such as Zak McKracken, Indy Jones, and R2D2.

Role-players from way back may recall **Tunnels and Trolls**, the old paper and pencil game from Flying Buffalo. Next month this *genuine* role-playing game will be available again on the PC.

Minding Max

Strategy and simulation specialist 360 Software has left Mirrorsoft, its UK distributor, and signed up with Mindscape.

The first game to be released under the auspices of Mindscape will be **Blue Max**, a First World War flight simulator for the PC which will include a 256-colour VGA display. Other features include an instant replay facility and a two-player modem option. Following this will be **Das Boot**, named after the TV mini-series of the same name. And no, this is not a tale of old cobblers, but a Second World War submarine simulator which looks as though it could give **Silent Service II** a run for its money.

Just to complete the sim city, 360 also has **Mega Fortress** – a B52 bomber command simulation based on the book, *Flight of the Old Dog*. In the game the player takes the role of all five crew members, and attempts to save the world from a fate worse than Russian food.

According to Mirrorsoft, 360's departure will not affect the release of the 1 meg Amiga version of **Harpoon**, on which the company has been working for some time. It is not yet known which firm is going to release the expansion sets for this game.

Your move

Ever wanted to pit your wits against a chess grandmaster? No, neither have we. But if you have, then switch on BBC2 on Friday, December 7th, at 11.15 pm and you'll get the chance. Appearing on *Your Move* will be the enigmatic figure of UK grandmaster, Jon Speelman. The programme will give viewers the opportunity to phone in their moves in a live match against Speelman, in what is being described as the first 'interactive television programme'. Readers interested in participating should phone 071-410 0500. Now!

TV Sports Comeback

Following our story on the legal problems surrounding **TV Sports Baseball** in the last issue, Cinemaware VP, Sam Poole, calls to put the record straight:

'The court case was decided in our favour a few weeks ago,' he tells us. 'What happened was that we contracted Beyond Software to produce the game for us by a given date. That date came and went and we still had no sign of a game.

'Not wishing to be hard nosed about this, we gave them another six months. Still nothing. At this point we terminated the contract as was our legal right. Beyond then took us to court to retain the rights to the game. The judge threw the case out of court after only three hours'. **TV Sports Baseball** is now scheduled for a March release (for more details on this game see Max Matrix's column).

German company Rainbow Arts have almost finished a fantasy (American) football game, based loosely on Games Workshop's **Blood Bowl**. No hint of a title, let alone a screen shot, but watch this space.

Sim moon

Tired of flight sims? Then how about a 'Lunar Colony Simulator'. That's exactly what Mindscape will be releasing in the shape of **Moonbase**. Your mission is to establish and manage the growth of a fully fledged independent colony, without exceeding your £100 credit limit. Can you maintain your tenuous hold hold on this hostile surface, *and* ward off the bailiffs?

Whoops

The retail price of **Action Stations!** is £39.95, not £29.95 as stated last issue. Sorry!

Your trains tonight

The latest addition to the series of '18' railway games is **1835**, from the Germany company Hans im Glück. The game is being produced with the full approval of the originator of the system, Francis Tresham. The map covers *all* of Germany in the pre--Prussian period with historically accurate companies.

According to Hans im Glück *herumkommandieren* Bernd Brunhoffer, the game resembles **1830** more than **1829**: 'There's much more building than in **1830**, especially in the early stages, but the stock market is much more important than in **1829**,' says Dr Brunhoffer. 'One of the really unique things about the game,' he continues, 'is the "nationalisation" option, or the *vorpreussische gesellschaft* as we say. This is available when a player owns more than 50% of the stock'.

1835 will receive its European premier on the *Strategy Plus* stand at Mindgames '90, where Prof Brunhoffer will be demonstrating and selling the game. Francis Tresham himself will be presenting a seminar entitled, 'Designing Your Own Board Game' at Missenden Abbey, January 11 to 13. This will be a residential course. For further details, telephone 0494 890296. Mr Tresham's company, Hartland Trefoil, will shortly be releasing a revised version of **Spanish Main**.

Own goal

Hobbyists anxious to deny any connection between wargaming and the real thing, will be dismayed to learn of the accident that befell one of the partners of Gamers Inc, a small American wargames company. A mortar that he was playing around with misfired and blew off both his thumbs. According to *Wargamer* magazine, the incident occurred while he was 'maintaining the defense of his country'. Any information to the identity of America's assailants would be gratefully received.

Boom time

Board game enthusiasts must be feeling starved of new games as the industry continues its decline. For this magazine's coverage of board games, we are largely dependent, not only on new releases, but also on games that it is felt are appropriate to our readership (ie no strategy articles on **Sip and Go Naked**).

The Essen Games Fair, due to take place in late October, should also go some way towards easing the drought. Certain to be premiered, in addition to **1835**, are Alan Moon's **Airlines** – a strategy based card/boardgame – and Ian Livingstone's **Boomtown**, a family board game set in the 1950s, in which players compete to acquire premium plots of land in order to build the town of their dreams *(Milton Keynes? – Ed)*.

For future issues, we have lined up reviews of **World War II**, **3rd Fleet**, **New World**, and **Republic of Rome**. Don Greenwood of Avalon Hill will be also be contributing a piece based on the development of the latter.

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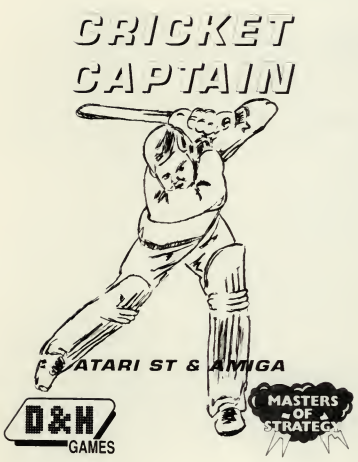
CRICKET CAPTAIN

Out For A Turkey

by Brian Walker



IN A year when cricketing records went berserk, any attempt at a realistic simulation was going to have its problems. But even Old Moore and a dozen psychics could not have foreseen the catastrophe that is **Cricket Captain**. Who in Wisden's name are the Majestic 12, and on what planet do they play cricket?

Opening the package as objectively as possible, one's confidence is not raised by the pamphlet (it would be an exaggeration to call it a manual) that lurks within. A scrappily produced piece of paper that shows as much feeling for the game as your average elephant.

Caught Out

After loading, the first thing you see is the draw for the 'J P Cup', followed by the 'C A Cup' and then the 'B H Cup'. As captain of Lancashire I was delighted to find my team drawn against Dorset, so it was something of a shock when Warwickshire took the field.

An even bigger surprise awaited me when I noticed that their team contained not one living Englishman. Some names are recognisable, but the initials had been changed to protect the innocent. To add to the confusion, the hitherto J P Cup is now described as a 'league' while the C A League has become a cup. Dorset? Warwickshire? Cup? League? Who cares? I just wanted a game. However, even this simple pleasure was denied me when a bug stopped play for the day.

At this point I decided to contact D & H Games to find out what the score was. Yes, there had been problems with the ST test version of **Cricket Captain**, owing to the 'six different operating systems of the Atari'. Ignoring the fact that I had understood the version I was playing to be finished, I accepted their story and their offer to send me a new game, box and all. This duly arrived the following day.

Ashes To Ashes

All padded up I strolled to the wicket when lo and behold, out popped the creature again. However, after some fiddling around I discovered the answer appeared to be simple, even though it eluded both D & H and their awful pamphlet: you must press the fire button during the match phase when you make a selection, otherwise you'll think the game has 'hung'. Given the dreadful arcade sequence which follows, it might be better if it did. No sooner had my side been bowled out for 46, than the game *did* hang. Percy Verence being my nickname, I rebooted only to find the match sequence hang immediately, fire button or no. At this point the match was abandoned.

Despite the brevity of the occasion, this much has been gleaned: **Cricket Captain** makes Kerry Packer's infamous Cricket Circus look like the Ashes. **Cricket Captain** is not a stats based or any type of replay game. What stats there are, are very simplistic. If the programmers had done their homework, they would have found that cricket is a game rich in figures, all of which are readily available. Instead they've taken the lazy option and produced compounded ratings, so there are not even any batting averages – an incredible omission. There appears to be no choice as far as selecting bowlers or batsmen, though because of the aforementioned problems this is difficult to confirm.

Soft Option

You can edit the names on view here, though it is quite a task especially with the joystick interface. The 'management' side involves hiring and firing people in much the same way as occurs in soccer management games. Indeed this genre appears (unfortunately) to be the strongest influence on the game. The match sequence is arcade based. Given what had gone before, I am not too optimistic that the pathetic stats that are provided would have any effect on performance in this phase. Wickets are variously described as 'hard' and 'soft' which perhaps is the definitive giveaway to the programmer's lack of cricket nous.

As for the bug, I cannot, of course, say that it is an integral part of the ST version. This review is simply based on *my* experiences. However, I would certainly advise anyone considering purchasing an ST version of this game to boot it first, and go immediately to 'play match' which is where the problems seem to occur. Otherwise, if indeed there can be an 'otherwise', whoever coined the phrase 'It's a funny old game', must have had **Cricket Captain** in mind. Unfortunately, the joke is likely to be on you. SP

Programmed by
The Majestic 12

Published by
D & H Games

Price £24.99

Available for the Amiga and ST
Reviewed on the ST

WE LIKE...

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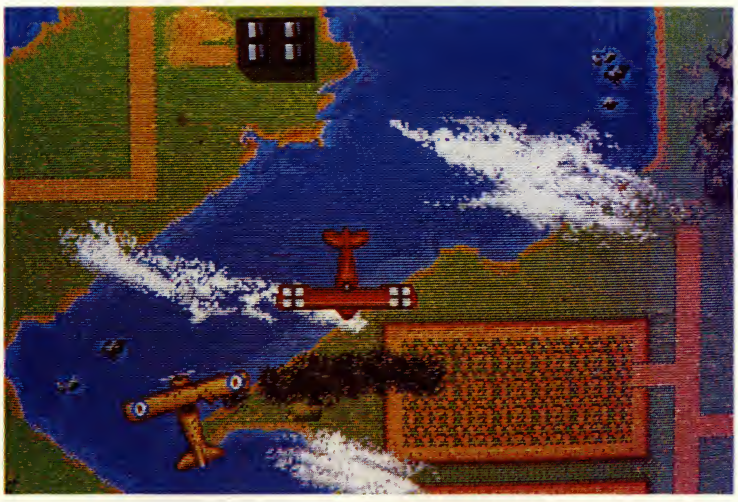
WINGS

Bandits On The Run

by Paul Rigby



CINEMAWARE describes **Wings** as a personal combat simulator. Actually that is not truly correct. The only combat simulators of any note are **Battlehawks** and **Battle of Britain** from Lucasfilm. **Wings** goes further than this simple description.

Wings is a summarised account of the action experienced by a young Second Lieutenant (you) in a fictionalised Aerosquadron (the 52nd) from 1916-1918. It offers a variety of missions (would you believe 230?) including air-to-air and air-to-ground plus a number of well designed and very welcome personalised touches that add a tremendous amount of atmosphere. In fact, the atmosphere, the 'feel' of being a young, frightened man in a big bad war is one of the aspects of the game that make it so successful.

Historical Accuracy

Wings arrives on two disks, is for 1 meg Amigas only and, owing to the constant disk changing, really needs two disk drives.

Cinemaware have surprised me with the documentation. It's very good – for a change. You get two booklets. The first of these is a standard instruction booklet of 19 pages.

The second booklet is an excellent historial account of being an aviator in the First World War. Within the 83 pages are sections listed as The Life of a Pilot, The War in the Air, Principles of Flight, Aerial Tactics and Tips, The Amazing Flying Machines (a look at the popular aircraft of the time), The Great Aces (similar but this time featuring the well known aces such as Richthofen, Guynemer and Ball), War Stories and Battle Maps.

Once loaded, the introductory sequence shows the first flight of the Wright brothers over the sand dunes of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Dramatically, the scene shifts to a dogfight over a battle-torn city on the Western Front. Excellent stuff.

The first thing you have to do is create a pilot. Each pilot will have his own statistics: Flying Ability, Shooting Ability, Mechanical Aptitude and Stamina. You are able to spend a reserve of credit points on each statistic to boost them.

Each stat has a rating depending on how you have improved. For example, the lowest Flying stat rating is sitting duck. The better each stat becomes, through experience in battle, the better you become.

After creating your pilot, you join your squadron and proceed with your first mission. Missions include patrols, ground attack, balloon busting, and so on. Some missions are performed from different perspectives. Ground attack is from an external viewpoint while dogfighting is normally from a first person view.

Varied Missions

Controlling your aircraft is simple. There are no controls to worry about, just the joystick. This cuts the realism right down. However, flight characteristics are relevant – your aircraft is easy to stall, for example.

While the missions are very enjoyable you might think 230 missions might become rather too repetitive. This danger has been considerably reduced by varying similar missions. Patrols vary in the number of aircraft found in the sky, ground attack targets change, and so on.

There are a number of 'meanwhile' screens to link the action and events, which are implemented very well. For example, your character is in charge of the squadron diary. Before each mission, you read the latest entry for the week. This is always interesting reading. The accompanying music is excellent, even melancholy at times – which adds to the atmosphere.

Sound And Vision

Graphics are superb, which is nothing new for a Cinemaware game. the sound is up to the same high standards.

All in all, **Wings** is an excellent game for people who are intrigued by flight simulators but want a relatively easy entry point into this sometimes confusing genre. **Wings** will also be enjoyed by flight simulator buffs and Cinemaware fans who want to experience the atmosphere and mood of life in the stringbags of the First World War. SP

Designed by
John Cutter

Published by
Cinemaware/
Mirrorsoft

Available for the Amiga (1 meg required)

SILENT SERVICE II

Swimming With The Fish

by Brian Walker (1941-1943)

Designed by Arnold Hendrick and Roy Gibson

Based on the original Silent Service by Sid Meier

Published by Microprose

Price £34.99

Available on the IBM PC
Other versions to follow

CGA EGA VGA (256 colour)

AdLib, Roland MT 32 soundboards supported

VGA requires 640k of RAM. DOS 2 or 3 preferred because of the RAM hungry nature of DOS 4. All TSR programs should be disabled irrespective of graphics mode selected

IT WAS quiet. Too quiet. It's surprising how little noise a 17 000 ton troop carrier makes as it threads its way inexorably towards the bottom. Our 'fish' had hit it midships.

We were still kinda worried about this blip on the radar, though. The sea looked as deserted as downtown Detroit after dark. Yet, still, there was this blip. The guys just couldn't figure it. Then suddenly, it happened! The first depth charge launched us into full ahead tilt. After the fourth one hit, the sub was flipping around like a frog with a firework up its ass. And it was getting wet. Very wet. The bulkhead had gone and we were boldly plunging towards the place where many men had plunged before, but from where none had returned. Fortunately, at this point, Commander Walker was able to make his escape through the emergency hatch and paddle back to base. Just in time to write this review, in fact.

Silent Service II is an upgrade of Sid Meier's original version, launched in the dark days of CGA. No offence to Sid, but that's like describing a Ferrari as being an upgrade of a bicycle. Nothing symbolises the quantum leap in quality that the leisure software industry has achieved these last couple of years better than the manual – a high quality, 128 page production, that is a model of clarity and erudition. The wealth of historical detail provided therein is not just for show: knowing that a Mark 18 Mod 1 Torpedo can go 4000 yards at 27 knots helps you make correct decisions.

Rookie Commanders who balk at the size of the book can sail right into the training exercise provided. Old salts are recommended to try one of the seven 'single battles', all bar one of which are historically accurate.

What gives the game real flavour is the manual's guide to what happened in these engagements, together with some strategy hints. Fun as these are, the real action lies in the 'War Career' – effectively the campaign game. This starts in 1941 and continues, depth charges permitting, through to 1945. Except when you encounter the enemy, this takes place on a display of the Pacific Ocean (a paper map of which is also provided).

Before leaving port you must select a patrol zone. The type of shipping you can expect to encounter in the zone is historically accurate. Fuel consumption is important, so sensible navigation is necessary. If you run out, however, a tow mysteriously appears and guides you back to base. Upon return to port your performance will be assessed and points scored accordingly. The key factor here is the amount of tonnage sunk. This is crunched, along with the difficulty level and type of torpedoes used (flawless or historical), to produce a score which accumulates as your career progresses. Eventually your score will end up in the Hall of Fame. And if you're good, you might even get a medal.

Even if you have never played a submarine game before, this game cannot be recommended highly enough. The tension generated is remarkable, and is at times reminiscent of the greatest submarine film of all time – Wolfgang Petersen's *Das Boot* (well worth checking out on video). One thing that had put me off submarine games in the past was the keyboard overlay. Sure enough, there's one here too. However, Second World War subs were far less complicated than their present day counterparts and this is reflected in the simplicity of the layout, so you won't be groping around like a trainee typist.

The War Career scenario is played using a separate command summary. Engagements are fought out on a battle display. It is here that the crucial decisions are made, mostly of a navigational nature – trying to anticipate the enemy movements so that you may lie in wait, rather than risk a chase which carries with it the danger of detection.

Sub Logic

The easiest interface is a mouse, though a joystick can also be used. The graphics in VGA are of a high standard – as rich in detail as the medium will allow. The sound (via an AdLib) was effective, though the explosions could have done with some beefing up. As the technical info elsewhere on this page makes clear, this is a memory hungry program. However, the game moves right along, even in VGA, running from the hard disk on a 12MHz machine. The manual offers some excellent strategy tips to which I would add: ensure that all battles are fought in the zoom mode. When you're under attack from depth charges, go into maximum zoom and try to evade your attackers from there. Don't take on Japanese Patrol Boats, unless you want to end up in the sort of scenario which prefaced this review. If your TDC picks something out but won't let you get a fix on it, then it's almost certainly a patrol boat. In this case there's only one thing to do: in the succinct, but immortal, words of submariners everywhere: Dive! Dive! Dive! SP

ANCIENT BATTLES

Encyclopaedia Of War

by Dave Morris

IMAGINE that you're interested in the tactics of ancient world warfare, but you have neither the patience to paint £4000 worth of metal figures, nor do you own a table the size of Queen Victoria's tomb. What to do? Buy this game.

There are five scenarios that represent famous battles ranging from 326BC to 451AD, so historical simulation is quite possible. But you can also design your own maps and do a mix-and-match from the army lists provided, so the tabletopping types who enjoy pitting Assyrians and Indians against Imperial Romans should have a field day. Units are even given a points value to ensure balance.

Narrow View

The screen shows a section of the battlefield from behind your lines. This is the first quibble: you can scroll around the battlefield easily enough, but there is no sidebar or overview inlay to show just where your view 'window' is located at any time.

Units are shown as figures, each representing a number of men (usually in the region of 500-800 at the start of the battle, depending on the type). Clicking on a unit lets you examine its current status – morale, fatigue and strength as well as overall effectiveness – or issue orders. You only have a limited number of orders that you can issue with each of your leaders each battle turn – again, a feature very familiar to tabletoppers. Orders can be of the type Advance (a usually useless order sending the unit off directly towards the enemy map-edge), Move (to a specified square) or Follow (which is a free order telling the unit to hold formation with the last unit given Advance or Move.

Once you have issued orders, both sides move and, if in contact, fight. The result of a melee can be a retreat (the losing unit backs off a square if possible) or a break (if casualties have reduced the losing unit's morale too much). Breaking units race off back to their own map-edge, battling any friendly units that get in their way. That is another quibble: I'm prepared to swallow my words if historical evidence can be produced that shows otherwise, but in the absence of such I cannot really believe that would happen. Maybe they'd disorganise their friendly units by interpenetration, sure – couldn't that have been simulated?

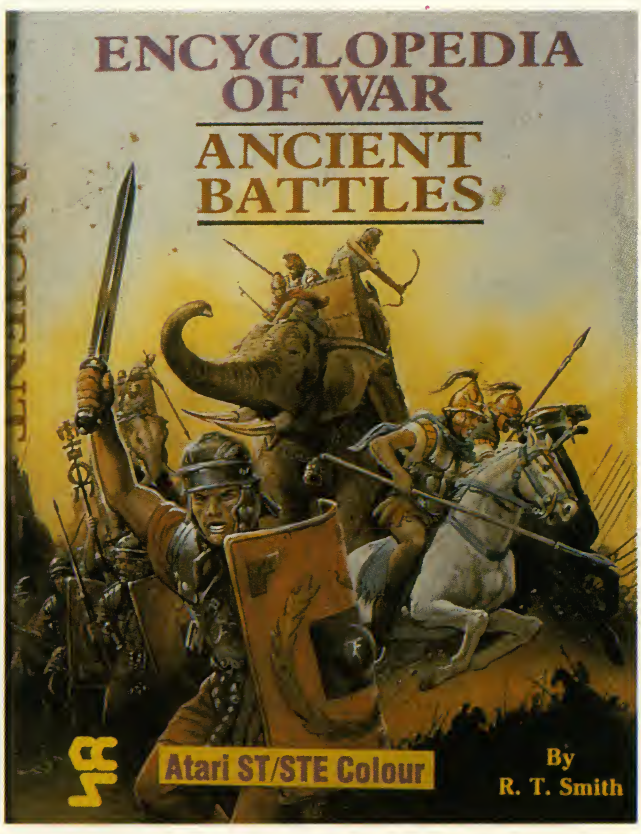
Last Orders

A slightly enlarged list of possible orders would be a great help. For instance, once you've outflanked the enemy with an advancing line of units, it is very difficult to wheel that line to attack obliquely. To move a line of four units from a vertical to a horizontal heading on the screen could take up to four separate orders: first unit advance one square, second advance two, and so on. For a beleaguered commander in the midst of battle, one order per unit is an extravagance he cannot afford.

After the battle, a report is given showing casualties, units remaining in good order at the close of play and suchlike. I was delighted by the booklet's description of this being the game 'in post mortem mode'.

Mix And Match

You can also switch to Campaign Manager mode to assemble your own armies for customised scenarios. You have to be aware of what you're doing here. If you set twice as many men per unit the Campaign Manager doesn't assume you are doubling their frontage, it assumes you are just fielding the units twice as many ranks deep. This means there is in fact a pre-decided range of scale for the maps, though it is only an implicit one. (You can get around this, of course, by deciding that what the computer means by '400 men' is actually '800 men' or whatever – but that can get confusing...)



Ancient Battles is for one or two players, and you also have the option to have the computer run some of the leaders on your side to save time – or to more accurately simulate the commander's frustration when some jumped-up cavalry commander decides to do his own thing. All in all I'd recommend it, but I preferred the earlier version's overhead view of units as 'counters' rather than the undeniably fancier but also less useful Borodino-style graphics. If I wanted to gaze upon row after row of soldiers' backs, I'd buy some metal miniatures or else join the army. The pure tactician is happier seeing his 'stuff' as simple, straightforward markers lined up on a map. SP

Designed by
R T Smith

Published by
CCS

Price £29.99

Available for the ST

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 WAYS

Paul Rigby Flies Sublogic

Flight Simulator designed by Bruce Artwick

Supports VGA and Hercules and the Maxx Yoke (as well as mouse or joystick)

Not compatible with TSR software

FS simulates a single engine, high performance propellor-driven aircraft of the Cessna 182 class; a business jet of the Gates LearJet 25G class; and a sailplane of the Schweizer 2-323 class.

MANY companies have sprung to fame through the release of one product. The Lotus Corporation has its **123** spreadsheet, Ashton-Tate has its **Dbase** database, Sublogic has **Flight Simulator**. Actually, it is no co-incidence that Sublogic's baby sits snugly with the names of the big business companies for it appears that **Flight Simulator** is one of the most (if not the only) accepted 'games' within the business community. As such, **Flight Simulator** has been termed the 'Industry Standard' by many writers. In fact, **Flight Simulator** was considered important enough to be the test for the IBM compatibility of many PC clone computers.

Indeed, using the title **Flight Simulator** on the same page as the word 'game' may be misleading. **Flight Simulator** is a true simulator, so serious as to provide all of the Visual Flight Rules and day and night Instrument Flight Rules as stipulated by the FAA – the governing body of civilian flight in the States. Proficiency with **Flight Simulator** can even be logged as flight time in a real pilot's log-book for those pilots learning to fly and wishing to obtain a Private Pilot's License in America.

Needless to say **Flight Simulator** is the most accurate simulation of flight anywhere in the home computer market. Just about every disk-based computer in the land has a version of **Flight Simulator** (**FS**) available for it: from the PC to the Apple II, from the Amiga to the ST. However, while other versions have reached 2.0 the PC version appears to be the only active variant as it has now reached version 4.0 (distributed via Microsoft and described below).

FS concentrates upon the Cessna 182 single-seat prop. Realism is high in this area, though less so for the Learjet 25G and Schweizer 2-32 class glider which are also included. The simulation considers around 47 characteristics of the aeroplane with the addition of multi-view screens (internal and external). Included are window-within-window views (for example: see a satellite view of your aircraft within a small window overlaid upon the front view of the cockpit). Dynamic scenery enhances the atmosphere: you'll see other aircraft taking off and landing or taxiing, airport trucks, balloons, yachts, and so on (pity there's no collision detection with these objects, though). Weather is variable and random, night and day flying is possible, and you have the chance to design and flight-test your own aircraft in a nifty little utility. Then there are the flight instruments, which include the whole gamut of navigational aids such as VOR, ILS and DME, as well as a variety of radios, pressure gauges and so on.

FS is a different breed of simulator from the usual fare. You should not buy this program with any thoughts of completing dangerous combat missions. Flying and landing in one piece is an achievement in itself. There are a variety of things that can go wrong with your Cessna (dodgy engine, throttle, or whatever) and there is the challenge of navigating yourself around the game world. However, once they are mastered the only new challenge is to fly and explore one of the many scenery disks. **FS** is tremendously enjoyable and satisfying if approached in the right way. However, **Falcon** it isn't. So be warned.

Graphics are solid 3-D with a fair degree of detail that presents itself in a similar way to **Falcon** – clumps of detail with not much in between. The buildings are rather general and mountains are rather pyramidal.

Sound is limited but as it is not really needed in **FS** it can be ignored without losing any sense of atmosphere. Sound on the Amiga and ST versions is the best around at the moment, with a believable rendition of the Cessna's engine. PC owners may be interested in a new soundboard known as MSound (from Gravis in the States) that promises to include a driver for **Flight Simulator** which presents digitised sound of a real Cessna 182.

Flight Simulator may be enjoyable but the game's design can be drastically enhanced. Just look at the books written by the likes of Charles Gulick (published by Compute! Books and Microsoft Press) who presents a variety of possible scenarios, adventures and situations that make **FS** more exciting. Taking off from the limited space on one bridge, playing the 'getaway car' in a fictional robbery, and so on add a whole new dimension to **FS** – now why couldn't Sublogic think of that, eh? (although times, they are a changin' – see Hawaiian Odyssey elsewhere).

The integration of all the flight simulation elements is good, mainly owing to the vast array of navigational and radio aids you must manipulate as you approach different airports. You get the feeling that there is life going on around you (especially with the dynamic scenery).

The design of the world is well done, even with the graphical reservations. Cities and airports (118 of the blighters!) all have their true characteristics and landmarks portrayed. Again, the policy of 'realism' is well supported.

The best aspect about Sublogic and Microsoft, though, is their dedication to the program. The policy of continual upgrades and enhancements, as well as a steady stream of scenery disks (see later) breeds customer confidence. After all, if a company believes in its product that much you have to take notice.

SUBLOGIC is not all cream cakes and **Flight Simulator** variants, however. There are other strings to the label's bow. Strangely, none of these have been as successful as the simulation that has elevated Sublogic to the heady heights of 'Industry Standard'.

I often wonder just what Sublogic set out to prove when it released **UFO**. That it could be just as 'wacky' as all of those arcade/shoot'em-up productions? That it knew the meaning of the word 'fun'? Maybe Sublogic's thorough market research uncovered a rather large green-faced, alien race, user base? Whatever, **UFO** plops you in the seat of a UFO, with the task of collecting Q-energy. This *Flash Gordon*-esque appendage is the strange, stringy, sticky, pliable stuff that, apparently, zips out of us humanoids when we experience fear. Consequently, you must scare the natural wastage out of every one, raise the fear level and harvest the Q-energy. Novel, eh?

Balls. The Q-energy takes the form of balls in the game. Lots appear from the White House and the Pentagon, by the way.

Apart from acting like a big bully to those humans on the ground you also get to chase aircraft. A time limit is fixed after which you must chase, terrorise and scoop up the offending aircraft. Lots of points are achieved this way. The trouble with **UFO** is that the flight model is totally alien, ahem. That is, the UFO does not respond as a normal aircraft does. It has its own set of aerodynamics. Getting used to these differences can be frustrating. Subsequently, control, when you really need it, is marginal. Docking with your mothership, for example, is a pain in the neck. Frustration follows with the scenery. There isn't any. Well, I fib – just a bit. There is a dash but only in a small concentration. The majority of the world is a barren or over-simplified place. **UFO** (available on PC, Amiga and ST) is certainly different but it lacks sufficient gameplay to warrant too much consideration. The novelty of the scenario will be shortlived, then the game's frustrations will creep in, bit by bit, until you will place the package back on the shelf and reload **Flight Simulator**.

AS FAR as combat flight simulators go, **Jet** (available on PC, Amiga, ST and C64) is rather odd. In some respects it is quite advanced in its design with eight different viewing modes and multi-window views (windows within windows). Then there is the ability to load **Flight Simulator** scenery disks into **Jet** which extends the game world. However, on the other side of the coin, **Jet** can be oversimplified and 'toylike'. The pitch ladder looks suitable for blind pilots (it is absolutely gigantic!), while the basic instruments surround the screen, framing the outside view, trying to be as unobtrusive as possible.

The aircraft you fly in **Jet** are the F16 and F18. MiG-21 and -23 aircraft serve as adversaries. The principal fault of **Jet** is that missions are too generalised to be enjoyable. 'Go and shoot some ground targets!' and 'Shoot down a few enemy aircraft!' is **Jet** in a nutshell. There is no structure to the game. It is strange how Sublogic appear to be full of decent ideas but lack the knowledge of successfully implementing them into a playable game. Maybe if the brief had been to create the most accurate F16/F18 simulation in the world – then they would have produced a program worthy of note. As it is, **Jet** looks rather lost.

Graphics are fair if rather barren, and enemy aircraft are quite well depicted. Sound is simplistic and, again, sparse. Integration and interaction are poor. The graphics themselves suffer from low frame rates on all formats (only alleviated on high power PCs) which, ultimately, interferes with the elements of flight, and degrading the flight model. Also the solid 3-D graphics sometimes show half a mountain or an empty vector. Jet unfortunately shows its age.

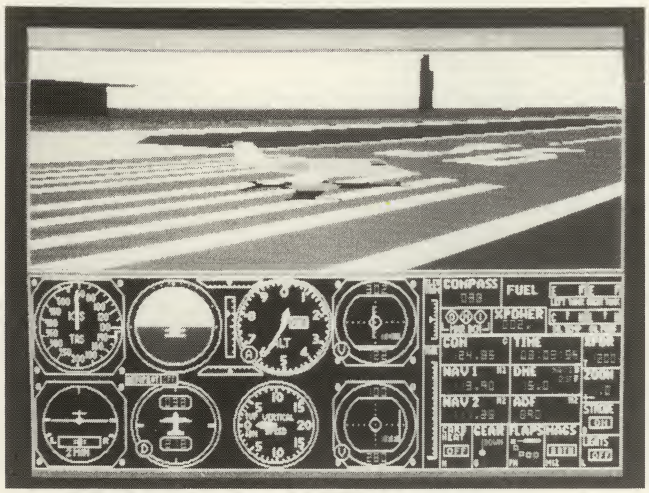
There are two other flight simulators produced or initiated by Sublogic. **Stealth Mission** and **Thunder Chopper** (released by Sierra which licensed the Sublogic 3-D system) – the subject of each being pretty obvious by their titles.

Both are disappointing, lacking in the required gameplay needed for simulations of this type. Both suffer from low frame rates and poor design. Both should be avoided.

Back to sanity and back to **Flight Simulator**. Have you noticed the relative upsurge in scenario disks? Not only in simulations (such as **Falcon** Mission Disks) but other software such as role-playing games (for example, **Bloodwych**) and strategy games (for example, **Populous**). It is an ideal method of extending the popularity of a well received game, a good way to save time and cash developing a new idea and, most importantly, a surefire seller.

However, scenario (or more properly, in Sublogic's case – 'scenery' disks) are all too familiar to Sublogic as the company is, probably, the greatest exponent of the genre. Sublogic uses the scenery disk to extend the flight area of **Flight Simulator** to different areas of the world. Each new scenery disk may include new states or countries complete with famous landmarks from the area. In this way Sublogic has released disks that not only cover the whole of the United States (totalling 12 scenery disks) but also Japan and parts of Europe.

The scenery disk is meant to be a vehicle for exploration. There is not an awful lot to do except fly around and, well, look at things. In this way the disks are a true extension of the original. No attempt has ever been made to improve the gameplay. However, it appears that Sublogic is attempting to put its house in order with the release of its latest scenery disk, Hawaiian Odyssey. It not only includes the usual exploration but also introduces a complete adventure which livens up the package no end. To put this release into perspective let's look at a recent scenery disk which follows the more traditional



lines. In any case, Sublogic's scenery disks generally tend to escape review by most magazines so it may be worthwhile to many prospective buyers out there to see exactly what you get for your readies.

The Western European Tour scenery disk covers three areas in Western Europe: the southern parts of the UK, northern France and southern West Germany. The pack comes in standard folder used by all scenery disks. Opening up you will find, in one side, the disk, loading instructions and four fold-out navigation charts. Three cover, in detail, the areas covered by the disk and the fourth is a general chart for the whole of Europe. The whole lot is fitted into a transparent pocket which is designed to be fitted into a specially made, Filofax-style folder that can be purchased at extra cost. This folder can accommodate all of your scenarios at once and very presentable it looks too.

The other side of the folder contains a wad of paper. Initially you are given suggestions on routes to take and places to visit. References are given if you wish to go to a specific place straight away – you can punch these into the original program and the program will deposit you onto your desired location. After that there are three sections detailing the airports, including a simplified airport plan, found within the three regions. Again, this info is designed to be fitted into a folder as it is already punched with the appropriate holes and labelled card separations are given.

After loading up and taking off you will quickly become accustomed to the familiar **Flight Simulator** style. Graphics tend to arrive in clumps but they can be worth the wait. London Bridge is well produced, for example, and you can even fly to Red Square in Moscow! Fine, but once you've seen one Red Square you've seen them all. There is nothing to prolong the life of the disk and any interest soon disappears after you have seen the sights.

This is where Hawaiian Odyssey steps in. Supplied in a **Flight Simulator**-style box, this time, the scenery disk is still intended to be placed within the aforementioned mystical folder.

Again, you get a disk, loading instructions, navigation map and airport details. However, this time you will find two additions to the usual fare.

The first add-on is what is known as 'Experimental Scenery'. To access this area you have to fly into the principle crater of Kilauea volcano where, apparently, you will be thrown into a time/space warp, transported to the other end of the island chain where you find a seventeenth century Barkentine ship (don't ask). Fly into the crater of Mauna Loa and you are presented with seven portals – each leading into a different area. For example, you may find a kitchen (four miles wide!), a piano with an 8000 foot keyboard, a city with no sense of up and down, and so on.

However, as well as that lot you have an honest to goodness scenery adventure. The task is to locate the secret jewel of the goddess Pele. You must find the clues that will lead you to your prize, scattered around the islands. A tough job from the cockpit of an aircraft.

The Hawaiian Odyssey disk is, surely, the way ahead for Sublogic and their scenery disks. It gives the buyer far more value for money and adds a measure of expectancy for the next release instead of the usual 'Oh, not another one' comment which I've heard on occasions. Highly recommended for all **Flight Simulator** aficionados.

Such is life and **Flight Simulator**. But wait. With Christmas on the way, what do you buy the **Flight Simulator** devotee who has everything? Well, if he is a sensible aficionado and possesses a hard disk, give him a copy of the Instant Facilities Locator. The IFL is a handy, if rather extravagant, time saver of a utility. Only available for the PC (with the aforementioned hard disk) at the moment, it enables you to locate absolutely any area within your vast database of scenery disks.

You will notice, after installing IFL, how unobtrusive this program can be – yes, there it is, tagged onto the end of the NAV/COM menu in your **Flight Simulator** program. Just access the IFL and type in the name of the location you wish to visit, and there you are. Rather nice, rather expensive – but then, isn't that the case with all 'rich men's toys'?

SO WHAT of the future? Well, Sublogic appears to be going through a bit of a trying time. It is mixed up in a variety of legal wranglings in the States. Hence many products have slowed development or have been placed on hold. **ATP**, which may have been a victim of the legal tug-of-war, simulates several large passenger jets including the Boeing 747 and Airbus A300 – although you'll be encouraged to fly the Shorts 360 (a smaller aircraft) to begin with. Apparently the scope of the program will be on the scale (if not greater) than **Flight Simulator**. ATP should be available in the States as you read this and in the UK within a month's time. An Amiga version is planned but it may be as much as a year away from release.

Other new products include a new scenery disk that'll cover New England (in the States) including New York, Montreal, and so on. Two hardware projects are still being worked upon. The Flight Console incorporates a yoke and throttle as well as switches for flaps and so on. Available as a separate unit but compatible with the console will be a set of rudder pedals. Release dates on these products is... well, who knows? They've been on the 'coming soon' sheet for ages.

Finally. **Flight Simulator** 5.0. Yes, there are rumours, strong rumours of the release of this new version. Microsoft handles all **Flight Simulator** versions since Sublogic sold the PC rights to them. Fasten your safety belts! SP

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

TSR's Finest Hour

by Jonathan Turner

IT SEEMS fitting that in this, the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Britain, two excellent games should come out on the subject. **Their Finest Hour** (Lucasfilms) is perhaps the definitive software simulation of the Second World War dogfight, but **The Battle of Britain** is a simple, playable version of the entire conflict for adults and older children.

As usual with TSR board games, the components, look and overall feel of the game is excellent. The plastic planes on their Perspex stands are the high point, giving one the impression of an RAF briefing room from a sixties war film. It is a shame that the stickers for RAF groups 10 and 11 are the wrong way round, because otherwise the game is physically flawless.

Mechanics comprise basic and advanced games, playable in one and three hours respectively. The basic game is extremely beer and pretzely, relying heavily on dice rolling, but is a useful learning tool for the advanced game. It continues until the Luftwaffe have succeeded in four missions, at which point victory points for downed planes, destroyed installations and the length of the game are counted. This version could more properly be called Introductory than Basic, I think.

This photo is based on the prototype version of Battle of Britain. The finished version differs considerably in colour, though the components are the same

Dog Fights Dog

The Advanced game, although only slightly more complicated mechanically, introduces a number of interesting historical twists, as well as averaging out the luck factor. It continues for eight game turns, at the end of which the German player must have completed nine missions or he loses.

Each game turn consists of three stages: the ready stage, the mission stage and the post-flight stage. In the ready stage, five missions are drawn by the German player. These are targets for the turn, either cities, radar installations or air bases. The cards list the number of bomber hits needed to knock out that particular objective. He assigns one of the missions to each of his Luftflotten, and discards the other two. The planes are then readied by dealing squadron cards into flight boxes. The German player deals six into each box, and the British player three. The Luftwaffe can now examine their cards, but the British are not allowed to see what their flights consist of until their first dogfight to simulate the variable strengths of the British forces.

Sudden Impulse

The Mission stage consists of five impulses, in each the Germans move, then the British, then dogfights occur, and finally any bombing by surviving bombers over their targets. Each German flight has five movement counters numbered between one and five, each to be used once per turn, so if a flight uses its four counter on the first impulse, if it wishes to move four spaces subsequently, it must use its five counter, with the result that all fighters in the flight run out of fuel and are returned to France. This also happens if the flight moves as far north as Coventry or beyond, or after impulse four, failing other eventualities. This makes for an interesting juggling exercise for the German player, as if the system is used right it is possible to evade pursuing Spitfires, but if you get it wrong, a flight of defenceless bombers can be jumped on by the entire RAF.

The British have problems of their own, however. Their flights are always allowed to move up to three spaces, but their effectiveness in combat is in indirect proportion to the distance covered. If a flight does not

Designed by
Ken Sommerfield and Tom Hoffman

Published by
TSR

Price £22.50

2 players

Playing time
Basic: 1.5 hours
Advanced: 3 hours

move in an impulse, it can commit all three of its planes to ensuing combat, but if it is at full stretch, it can only commit one.

Luftflotten KO Rules

Dogfights occur in spaces where opposing forces meet, the German player choosing a flight to be attacked first, and the RAF either engaging or waiting for a juicier target. When a fight occurs, the German planes are divided into three groups face down and the British player commits his planes. The Germans are revealed, dice are rolled (because of the increased number of planes in this version, probabilities are correspondingly evened out), losses are taken, and surviving bombers can bomb if over their targets.

The most interesting element of the game then comes into action: the effects of attrition. The British player desperately tries to rebuild his planes and mend his radar stations for the next turn, as a flight is removed from the board if three planes cannot be placed in its box. The most vulnerable group is 10 group, which starts the game with only nine planes in three boxes. Luftflotten can also be knocked out – permanently – and this is the surest tactic for British victory, but the corresponding losses can be disastrous.

Feint and bluff are at a premium throughout the game, making for a nailbiting conclusion as the Luftwaffe near their ninth successful mission while simultaneously the RAF look for a few more elusive kills to take the Luftwaffe out of action.

Battle of Britain is a well balanced, exciting game that can be finished in an afternoon or evening, and is a fitting tribute to the fiftieth anniversary of 'The Few'. SP

WRASSLIN'

Sticks And Clones Will Break Your Bones

by Brian Walker

QUESTION: What do tag team wrestling and naval warfare have in common? Answer: **Enemy in Sight**, Avalon Hill's own card game set on the high seas of the Napoleonic era.

It is a fine game and this slightly incongruous retread is more than equal to it. In **Wrasslin'**, instead of firing broadsides you're applying the Boston Crab, while the term 'boarding parties' takes on a whole new meaning.

Each player takes the part of a 'grunt and groaner', some of whom are good, and some of whom are *baad*. The good guys cannot play cards that allow them to gouge their opponents eyes out, however they usually have the advantage of being stronger.

Designed by
Bruce Harper and Tyler Johnson

Published by
Avalon Hill

Price £12.95

2-8 players

Total Freefall

Play sequence consists of playing a card, usually to inflict the maximum amount of violence on your opponent, while he, in turn, seeks to do the same or relieve himself of the effects thereof. Successful assaults see you first losing strength, then agility, then stamina, and finally consciousness.

Drama is added by the use of the 'tag team' option, whereby if you play the appropriate card your partner can steam into both the ring and your opponent. 'Pin' cards are the key to victory: if you keep your adversary in a hold for three turns, then you gain a fall. Alternatively, if his stamina falls off the scale then you gain a submission. Unlike the real 'sport', where you need two falls, two submissions, or a knockout for victory, in this game one of either will suffice. Incredibly, considering the violence on show here, there is no knockout option.

The variety of cards in **Wrasslin'** means that the game is not quite so simple as it sounds. Apart from pro-

viding an element of tactical play such a catholic selection helps simulate the insanity of the sport itself.

Although essentially a two player sport, and therefore, perhaps, a two player game, the tag team rules circumvent this potential restriction quite neatly. The game does work in the two player mode, though is a little on the dry side. To liven this up I would suggest using the tag team format even though no rules are provided. All you have to do is select another wrestler, deal him seven cards face down, and then follow the usual tag rules.

I would also recommend using *two* falls or submissions when playing with only two players. This should provide a game of about an hour and a quarter.

Better still, try to find more players as this game is very much a case of the more the merrier.

Various options are provided for multi player games, varying from team play, to management/elimination, through to 'Battle Royal'. The latter is pretty much a free for all which involves five or more grapplers in the ring at the same time.

Bridge That Gap

Apart from being great fun, **Wrasslin'** repays good card play, though Bridge it ain't. If you're one of those types who gets picked on in games, then you'd better practice self restraint before you throw your hat in this ring. The motto here seems to be when a man's down, jump on him.

The only real negative aspect of the game is the production: the wrestler's cards are printed on stock even cheaper than the image of the sport itself. The spot colour also adds to the feeling of corners being cut. Maybe I'm being churlish here, for when the bell tolls, we should all be thankful that there is a company that cares enough about games to release products like this. SP

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SHOWBIZ

Put Your Hands Together

by Brian Walker

ALTHOUGH this is the third edition of an excellent game, it has only had limited availability in the UK up to now. As the manager of a talent agency, your job is to sign up the type of artistes who will be in demand. Each year six cards are placed in the 'in demand' section of the board, and six more in the forecast space. Each manager can have six artistes under contract at any one time. Artistes are acquired by selection from a central pool. However, when you select a performer any player may challenge for the right to place him or her under contract. Challenges are resolved by a bidding system: each player grabs a mittful of the fifteen resource markers with which you start; highest bidder gets the performer being sought. All resource markers are returned to the central pool from where they are returned to the players (on an equal basis) at the end of each turn.

A Year In The Life

Once you obtain one of the dubious talents on offer, the question is; how long do you want him or her under contract for? The maximum is five years. Your decision should be based on the rarity value of the performer (they vary) together with the current demand and forecast. When all players have six performers under contract, a comparison is made between the player's roster and the artistes in demand. Points are scored, on an ascending basis, for each correct prediction. Thus endeth the first turn.

Each turn represents a year, so any artistes who were on a one year contract would now disappear off your roster. Contracts can be broken, but at a price. For every empty space on the player rosters, a new performer is drawn at random and placed in the central pool. Play continues for a maximum of 12 years (turns).

The game is flawless within its limited ambition. It has interaction, a reasonably high skill factor, and would be very easy to learn were it not for Avalon Hill's opaque rules. These do not even come separate but are part of the box, thus adding to the already cramped feeling they give off. To give them credit, AH have added an excellent 'star' rule which one of their playtesters came up with. It's worth noting that for the purposes of this review the game was played with two fourteen year olds (and their mum). At first the youngsters could not conceive of a game where you did not have to answer questions, or perform some kind of party trick. However, once they got used to the novel idea of a game involving skill they enjoyed it immensely. As indeed, should you all. SP

Designed by
Derek Carver

Published by
Avalon Hill

Price £16.45

Playing time: 90 minutes

Number of players: 2-6
(best with 4-6)

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VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

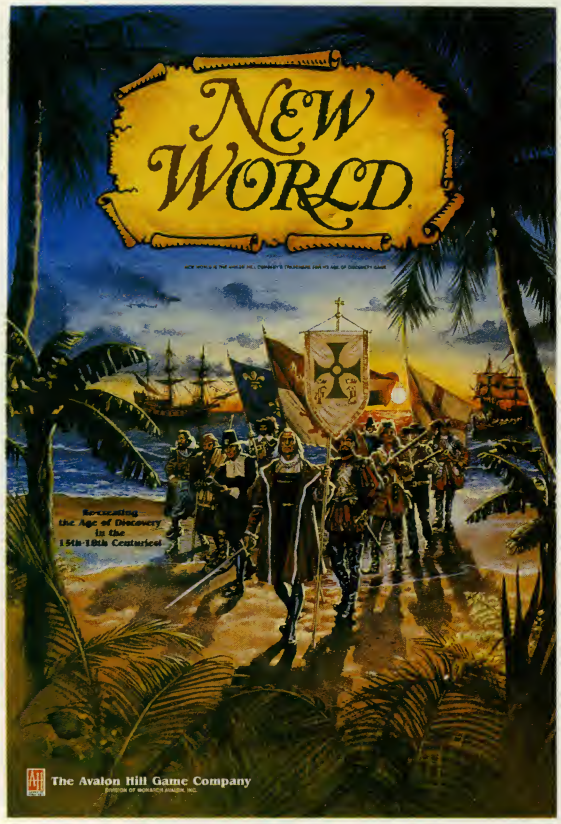
Design of a New World

by Derek Carver

I WILL take the seemingly curious step of starting this article on my shortly-to-be-published game **New World** by setting out the combat rule. I'll explain why in a minute.

The attacking player specifies how many of his soldiers are participating. He then rolls a die for the first attacking soldier. If he rolls an *odd* number the attacking soldier is eliminated. If he rolls an *even* number a defending soldier is eliminated. If he rolls a '6' not only is the defender eliminated by that attacking soldier may immediately roll again – this time ignoring any *odd* die rolls. If the attacker again rolls a '6' he may attack yet again and so on until he fails to roll a '6'. The battle continues until each attacking unit has rolled or all defending units have been eliminated.

Now – if you find you could not live with such a combat system, preferring instead the wargaming-type grid listing various odds, maybe **New World** is not for you. You would be happier, perhaps, with **Conquistador**, which deals with the same theme as a wargame simulation. If, on the other hand, you feel that such a system sounds a lot of fun both for participants and observers (even tough you might also be an enthusiastic wargamer, of course) then read on – you're one of us.



The Board

When you open the box you'll probably first look at the board. This depicts a map of North and South America (omitting part of Canada), which is, for the purpose of the game, divided into 26 climatic areas – and by 'climate' we mean 'survival chances', survival depending on a variety of factors not all totally limited to 'climate' as such. There are five different 'survival climates' so each of the 26 areas will have a colour indicating your chances of surviving there, some obviously being much healthier than others. These 26 areas are all of equal size, a situation necessitated by the use of 26 randomly placed tiles in the Exploration Variant.

The designation of these areas presented the first problem in preparing the game for publication. **New World** has been in play in various home made versions for a considerable number of years. Being a game for six players I had to ensure that all had a reasonably good chance of winning even though they would be starting the game at various places on the map. Over the years the map was gradually adjusted to provide this balance. Although my own board for the Standard Game was an abstract shape it was clearly seen to be of the Americas. Avalon Hill felt that its public would respond better to a real map and, unlike our players here, who weren't too fussed if we juggled a bit with the local conditions, Avalon Hill felt that its home customers would like not only to see a proper map but one that reflected the conditions known to them.

First attempts upset play balance, making it essential to start in the North East if you wanted to win. This imbalance isn't surprising considering it had taken such a long time to get the game right in the first place. However, we fiddled a bit here and there and poor Don Greenwood of

New World is published by the Avalon Hill Game Company, price £20.45

Available from most specialist games shops

Avalon Hill was finally worn down by my requests for adjustments, emphasising that at the end of the day it was a game we were making and not a school atlas. Not that the purist will find these changes too unpalatable. After all, we are dealing with America in the Age of Discovery, not America today, and moreover, just one of our 26 areas necessarily straddles a whole spectrum of natural conditions from which we have to select just one. In the end we managed to produce a game board that gave everybody a good starting chance within an acceptable narrow limit.

The board also indicates that certain areas are more fertile, that there are three major cities available for looting, and that there are a rash of prospective gold mine sites.

Finally, spread over the land are natives against whose presence you should protect your colonists, there always being the chance that relations with the locals might deteriorate one year and your settlement will be wiped out.

Come In Norway

The game is for six players, each representing a European country developing their holdings in the New World. If you stop to think about it you will immediately be able to name five countries which were active in the exploration and colonisation of America but you'll be stuck on the sixth. This didn't bother us when we played our own version of the game because we were simply colours, not troubling to assume a nationality. But Avalon Hill felt it necessary and coming up against the problem of the sixth European power asked if I would agree to reducing the maximum number of players to five. Although my **Blood Royal** is for five for much the same reason, I don't like games that are limited to five. I find it an irritating restriction. However, I saw their point and agreed. My agreement must have so taken them by surprise that Don Greenwood overlooked it! He went on to satisfy himself that Norway could legitimately become our sixth country. So three cheers for Norway!

During the course of play, the players will be attempting to secure income and control areas. There are two secure sources of income. You secure a regular income if you establish yourself in an area (if you have 4 colonist units left alive in it at the end of a game turn). Using established game parlance we call this Political Control although that is hardly truly descriptive. Your colonists will also sow and reap, and this also produces revenue (double in the more favourable areas). Both of these sources of income gradually increase as the game turns progress so that quite a number of colonists happily delving away will gradually produce a tidy sum.

The Lure Of Gold

Then there is the gold. If you are able to discover gold on one of the mining sites you can be in the money. But just as in real prospecting there is an element of chance in this. Marked mining sites have potential, but uncovering it is another matter. Also, when you discover it you don't know how soon it will run out, so it's a very uncertain business.

The treasure cities are another great cash source and here you are on more certain but much more dangerous ground. You have to capture these cities to secure the gold, but you might get so mashed in doing so that your fellow players will march into the city over your dead bodies.

So gold is the unknown element but so great is its lure you have to be strong willed to resist it. One or more players' performance in the gold business influences the strategy of the rest out of necessity, as you will readily appreciate.

Trouble Ahead

Now for the hazards once you've arrived in the Americas. First of all there are the locals. Their attitude to your presence is somewhat fickle. One turn they can be extremely friendly but the next you could be definitely *non grata*. So it is prudent, when you can afford it, to protect your colonists with soldiers just in case the natives turn somewhat unfriendly. But as you expand you see your strictly limited and expensive army sitting around guarding your colonists against the chance possibility of an attack by the locals and you quickly come to the conclusion that it would be better if you could bump the locals off, thus settling the matter and releasing any soldiers that manage to survive the encounter to assist your expansion programme. And this is exactly what happens. The local native population eventually gets reduced to just a few remaining pockets.

Your next problem is to survive the general nastiness of the local conditions. There's not much you can do about this other than be prepared for it and not every year is a really bad one. It varies from year to year (game turn to game turn) and this is a major factor in making every game different. But the risks can be calculated, of course.

The final hazard is the sea itself, but that is probably best illustrated by explaining the start of a game turn.

Getting Going

At the beginning of each turn you ship a number of colonists over to the New World. The more colonists you can get surviving there the better off you are. And here you have a choice. You can take a guaranteed four each turn or you can endeavour to attract more by risking a die roll with a guaranteed three minimum and six maximum, thus having a 50% chance of being worse off and a 50% chance of being either the same or better off.

You then plan where you want to send your colonists, whether you need more ships, also whether you are going to send out any soldiers that turn. All of this is secretly written down in the form of instructions to your Admiral. Players then move simultaneously. If you are familiar with my games you will know that I favour simultaneous action as much as possible and all action in **New World** is simultaneous except for land movement. Of course the battles are fought individually, but the nature of the combat system is such that everybody is interested in the gradual progress of the battle and this is a great fun element of the game.

Your voyages out and back are where you encounter the sea hazard. The sea around America is divided into numbered zones representing the distance you have travelled. If your landfall is in a sea zone numbered four, for example, you would have to roll four dice hoping not to roll any 1s, because for each 1 you roll you must roll again on a voyage losses table. Here again a player could go to the farthest point on the west coast involving rolling eleven dice and not roll a single 1 while another player staying in the north east could roll three dice and get two or three 1s producing much hilarity for all players except one! Once again this is getting away from your traditional wargaming tables, but having just crossed the Bay of Biscay myself I know there are no guarantees where the sea is concerned. There is an optional alternative system that has the same odds but in which the luck does not vary so much from player to player. It is up to the group to decide its preference or, as we do in our

Other published games by Derek Carver include: Dr Who, Warrior Knights and Blood Royale for Games Workshop; Showbiz for Avalon Hill (reviewed this issue) and Whirlwind for FASA

games, if there are diverse opinions leave it to the game leader for that particular turn to choose the system she or he prefers.

Here I must mention the special rule for the start. Although it is a reasonably minor thing I do so because I rather like it. I am always aware that in certain games one's prospects are sometimes decided by the chance element of the first move especially when all things are not totally equal. Originally a couple of players in game of **New World** could start the game disadvantageously by choosing the same initial landfall. I originally devised a rule (rather a messy one) to overcome this but a player was equally disadvantaged if she or he was sandwiched between two others – usually meaning that other players had large tracts to themselves (the game board is adjusted in size according to the number playing). One simply couldn't make allowances for everything and such an occurrence meant that a player or players wasted their first turn, in effect.

But now everyone secretly bids a certain amount of their very limited starting cash. They are bidding not for a specific starting location but for the order of choosing starting positions, the highest bidder choosing first, and so on. The cash for the bid is then handed to the player at the opposite end of the bidding scale. This in the five player game the first swaps bids with the fifth, the second with the fourth and the player in the middle neither pays nor receives. This means, for example, that the player choosing last starts the game possibly not from the position she or he would ideally have chosen but is compensated by having more money. It also means that players are more evenly spread around the board at the start, and there is certainly no luck. On your first move you may land only on the place you have chosen but on subsequent turns you can land where you like, of course. As I said, I am quite pleased with this simple solution to the hitherto problematical start and it might be a system to adapt for other games suffering from a similar problem.

Winning!

Avalon Hill talked me into changing the winning conditions. This caused endless difficulties in playtesting in order to get the thing right but I am pleased they did because the change is definitely an improvement.

In my original version players played for a certain number of turns and the player with the most cash won, but Avalon Hill preferred a more definite winning condition. I mentioned that I had toyed with the victory condition being control of a specified number of areas, but had rejected it as it led to a highly variable playing time. Avalon Hill urged me to think again about this. The result I came up with has introduced a new facet to into the play. Now the game is played for 10 turns (16 in the two player game) and the player at the end of turn 10 with the most cash is the winner – in effect, no change. But a player can snatch a premature win if up to and including turn nine she or he has political control of five or more areas, with cash merely breaking any ties. There is a 50% chance of a game prematurely ending in this way, but it is not easy. A win has to be snatched on about turn eight or nine, and if the other players are experienced they will see it coming and play to stop it. So, in effect, these premature wins end up less than 50% but, as readers will readily realise, it has an interesting and important impact on play.

The Variants

That is a general description of the main game. As mentioned at the beginning, players can opt for an exploration version involving covering the board with 26 tiles. The rules are identical but you don't know what is in an area until somebody goes into it.

Or you can make a random map and turn all the tiles over at the start, thus playing the Standard Game but with a different map each time. In this version the board is unlikely to be well balanced so the initial bidding is extremely important.

In my own version of the game the board was purely a plain sea divided into sea zones with a line of impassable rocks down the centre for three-quarters of its length. The precise tile layout was specified for the standard game but it allowed players to make the land masses just as they wished for the variants, ranging from one single land mass to a collection of large an small islands, if they preferred.

Because Avalon Hill has chosen to print the map for the Standard Game on the board it means that the other versions can still be played but the shape of the land mass must always resemble North and South America because the tiles have to block out the printed map. If you like the original idea there is nothing to stop you from drawing what was a simple board on a separate sheet and sticking it to the back of the published board. Or, who knows, Avalon Hill might even get round to offering such a board separately if they feel there is a demand.

Optional Extras

Without going into a detailed sequence of play, that has covered the major facets of the game. There are the usual few optional rules to satisfy the special interests of individual groups (personally I like to use the Reduced Political Control Benefits option as a standard rule) and, no doubt, groups will also add their own in due course.

Avalon Hill felt there should be a rule covering pirates, allowing players to attack each other on the return journey hoping to capture the gold that was being shipped home. I agreed, and originally had such rules but was never satisfied with them and they were reluctantly dropped. Nor had I ever managed to invent new rules that did satisfy me. But Don Greenwood came up with some which after modification in playtest seem to work fine and these are there for anybody who cares to use them.

One can hardly describe **New World** as a simple game, but it is certainly not a monster, and once one person has mastered the rules it is an easy game to teach to new players. All the play mechanism has been chosen with a view to generating both fun and noise and there is no hanging about waiting for your turn to come round.

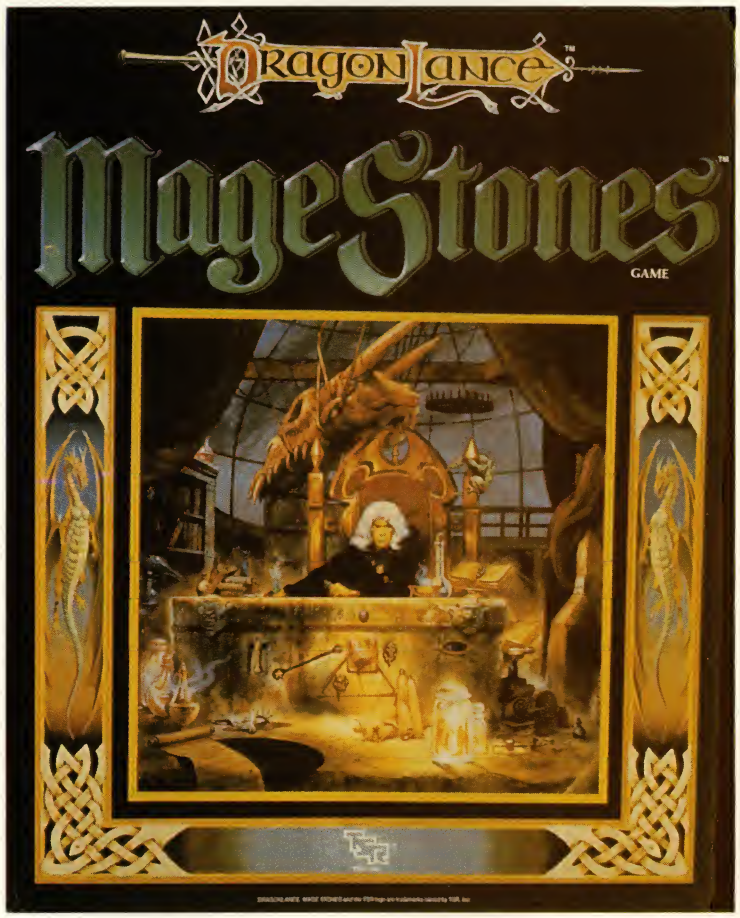
As for game length, six of us would reckon on completing the Standard Game in about five hours and four can complete a game in three and a half, once it has been set up. The play mechanics of 'exploring' adds a bit to the time in the Exploration Variants. It all depends upon the speed of play of the members of the group, of course, plus the ability of the game leader to keep things zipping along and, needless to say, you certainly won't achieve these times with your first game.

I must add that as I write this I have not yet seen a copy of the game but as an inventor I have so far been lucky with the published quality of my games (even though I could wish that FASA went in for thicker boards!) and given the general Avalon Hill quality I have no reason to believe that this will be an exception. S

Off licence

Brian Walker on Asterix and Mage Stones

BOTH these games recall nothing so much as *Monty Python's* dead parrot sketch. Like the devious pet shop owner, they are both trying to pass off something which is not quite what it seems. TSR's **Mage Stones**, for example, pretends that it has something to do with their *Dragonlance* saga, and spouts a lot of nonsense about magic stones in an attempt to make the connection. In fact it is a multi player abstract game, and a very good one too. As you could probably fit the entire market for such games (if described as such) into a telephone box, one can hardly blame TSR for dressing it up in such a way.



Bowled Over

The basic game mechanic is a simple one: roll three 3-sided dice (6-sided dice with numbers 1 to 3 marked twice), add up the total scores, then place your stone on the correspondingly numbered column. Opponents' stones can be 'bound' (removed) when two stones of the same type are horizontally, diagonally, or vertically adjacent.

Double Trouble

The first player to place all their stones on the board receives a positive score equal to the total number of stones off the board, while other players get a negative point for each stone they have left. There are a few other adornments, but basically, that's it. The game works well and is reminiscent in feeling of Sid Sackson's **Can't Stop**. There's enough interaction, skill, and stitching up of one's opponents to keep the enthusiast happy, and yet at the same time it's simple enough for family play. The production is colourful and of a high quality. If the suspect marketing ploy of TSR does succeed in luring fantasy fans over to games such as this, then more power to its elbow.

Asterix is a far more dubious proposition altogether. In a fit of marketing madness, Spears has launched not one, but *two* games with exactly the same name (the monicker refers to a French cartoon character). One can only assume that Spears paid over the odds for the licence and is determined to milk it for all its worth. Already one writer for this magazine purchased the 'wrong' game – the board version is, apparently, a real turkey. As if all this wasn't bad enough, the game itself is somewhat less than original. In many respects it is identical to Alex Randolph's **Hol's der Geier** (itself a descendent of **Destino**), published as **Teacher's Pet** in the UK by Waddingtons. For those unfamiliar with either game, here's how they work: each player gets dealt an identical hand, ranging in value from 1 to 15. A card from a central pack is flipped over each turn. These range from +10 to 5-. Upon seeing this card, each player secretly selects a card of his own. These are then revealed simultaneously, the highest card taking the trick. Obviously, the aim is to collect the plus cards and avoid the minus cards. It's a very simple yet ingenious little system, requiring both memory and intuition if you are to succeed. **Asterix** rather cheekily takes the basic premise, adds to it a sort of 'joker', and then throws in a refinement to the scoring process. It must be said that these changes improve the game considerably, though some sort of acknowledgement to the source material would have been in order. SP

MAGE STONES

Designed by
Tom Kruszewski

Published by
TSR

Price £14.95

2-6 players

ASTERIX

Designed by
David Parlett

Published by
J W Spear

Price £4.95

2-5 players

By the same designer:
Hare and Tortoise

Vive la change

I wholeheartedly applaud your change to intelligent computer games. I own an Olivetti PC and about 30-40 games, mostly adventure and sims, and am tired of mags devoted to Amiga/ST shoot 'em ups.

P I W Bartham
Kingston upon Thames
KT2 7QX

This is but one of the many encouraging letters we have received. Many thanks to you all.

Ratings war

The main reason I bought your mag is because of the title. I am an ardent strategy fan, and have been waiting for a magazine dedicated to the 'serious' side of computer gamimg since I bought my Spectrum eight years ago. I upgraded to an ST about two years ago, by which time I had given up the thought of ever seeing a decent strategy mag. Until, that is, I saw your first issue.

However, one of the main things missing from your magazine is an overall rating of each piece of software. I have read your reason for this and I totally agree with you – percentage ratings are no good at all, especially when only one reviewer is giving their opinion. However, I would like to see some sort of rating for the *strategic capabilities* of the computer opponent. Many are the times when I've bought software only to find that the computer is too easy an opponent. In fact, the only two pieces of software which give me endless entertainment are **Gunship** and **Red Storm Rising**. Both of these simulations have the depth of gameplay and reasonably intelligent opposition that games is of this genre require.

'Demon' Dave Palmer
Jarrow, NE32 4HL

We feel that the differing merits of computer opponents is too hard to quantify. Then there is the 'hidden agenda' element: how do you know *the computer is playing well? If you're* that *tired of walkovers, check out* ***The Bandit Kings of Ancient China,*** *coming soon.*

Adventures alive shock!

I welcome a magazine devoted to adventures, simulations and strategy, although inevitably I do have some suggestions and comments:

1) A section devoted to abstract games such as **Tetris**.

2) A section on the wealth of games currently available in the Public Domain.

3) Support for and reviews of programs produced by the smaller operations, notably one person software houses in the adventure market.

4) Reviews of books which support the types of games on which you are concentrating: for example, Stephen Hill's *Game Makers Manual* which contains sections on writing adventures, simulations, strategy games and role-playing games, guides to adventures and simulations.

Finally I would like to take mild issue with part of Theo Clarke's excellent article on Sierra. Although he may have meant it somewhat ironically, the comment 'eveybody knows that adventures have had their day'does, I feel, require some clarification.

I have been reading about the 'demise' of adventures for some years now, ever since a particular reviewer announced the death of text-only adventures on the release of **The Hobbit**. I suppose that is why the world and his wife have been recently scouring the country (and probably the world) for Infocom adventures, and Virgin Mastertronic are releasing the Infocom back catalogue.

I also anticipate that on release of Magnetic Scrolls' **Wonderland**, every software house in the country will once again climb on the graphic adventure bandwagon and reviewers will start declaiming the demise of the role-playing game. There's room for all as long as people have the imagination to write good programs and others have the intelligence to play them.

Alan Hoskins
Keymer, West Sussex BN6 8RD

Theo's comment was *meant ironically. As to your other points:*

1) Note our review of ***Welltris*** *in this issue, and watch out for* ***Ishido*** *and* ***Battle Chess II*** *in the next.*

2) In principle, we agree. It's more a question of time and space.

3) Yes, we are more than happy to support the smaller software companies, if they contact us.

4) Again, because we are a small publishing house, we are dependent on authors contacting us, rather than vice versa.

Teb-bit

The new magazine is acceptable as it stands, but I will in no shape or form be renewing my subscription when it falls due. The reason is simply that you included a complete page of Greenpeace propaganda. Your personal beliefs may support Greenpeace, but many people are concerned about their political stance. They are left-wing orientated and left-wing supported and whilst some or even many of their aims may be worthwhile they are dabbling in the world political scene too much to be considered a charitable organisation. They may have the right to be critical of the UK government, but they have no right to push their opinions, via the media, into everyone's homes.

If I wanted to read political agitprop I would buy a different magazine. If Greenpeace want to be universally accepted can they save a few humans who die unnecessarily in a given year, rather than a few whales? Will you be running promotions for *Socialist Worker* or *Militant Tendency* next? I will be advising all my gaming contacts or colleagues of the stance that you have taken.

C J Geggis
Romford, Essex RM5 3RT

We considered giving ads to Militant Tendency, *but* Class War *is more our style. In fact I believe they're preparing artwork right now.*

Bored gamer

I find the pathetic section on boardgames embarrassing. People seem to want computer games on fantasy subjects, and vice versa *(sic)*. You have a captive group of *Games International* re-subscribers for the next 10 or 11 issues, most of whom will feel somewhat cheated, but after that support for *Strategy Plus* will be from the same people who buy other computer gaming mags, not us.

Andy Daglish
Cheadle SK8 1JA

So computer fantasy games want people, do they? Whatever will they think of next. Any Games International *subscriber who wants a refund just has to ask. To date we have received just three requests, one of which, curiously enough, came from your group of 'supporters'.*

Full metal bug

I write to you to ask your advice on dealing with the companies responsible for producing substandard software. Recently I bought **Full Metale Planete** by Infogrames, and am

Letters continue on next page

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shocked to find a bug which has the effect of permanently removing your pieces at random. This is tantamount to having no Queen in Chess and makes the game almost completely worthless. My question to you thus is whether you feel that companies in this situation should offer a refund to all purchasers or endeavour to fix the bug and then send out the new program, free, to all owners.

I am sorry to have to pick out Infogrames in particular as I enjoy **Sim City** and **Full Metale Planete** (when it works correctly) but do feel that they should act more responsibly in giving us value for our £25 or else suffer the wrath of the public.

Neil Wilson
Horfield, Bristol BS7 8SD

Unfortunately you do not say whether or not you have contacted the company concerned. In our opinion you are certainly entitled to a refund, or at the very least, a bug free replacement.

Ace in the hole

How come you haven't reviewed **UMS II**? A review appeared in *Ace* ages ago. You'll have to be quicker off the mark than this if you want to stay in business.

David Stone
Notting Hill, London W11

The 'review' to which you refer was based on a preview. Ace *claimed the 'finished version' was no different to their previewed version, and also stated the game was 'out now'.*

We phoned Microprose on the day the review appeared (September 5th). We were told that the game was still not finished and was unlikely to be available before December. SP

WANTED DESPERATELY: Waddingtons **Starships, Grand Prix**, casper Games **Mafioso**, Ideal **Abandon Ship**, Gametime Games **Sopwith**, Gamut of Games **Infinity**. Schlosser Reinald, Ziehrerstr 11, W-8906 Gersthofen, Germany.

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FOR SALE: Bottom Line, Chicago, Executive deciion, Junta, Kings & Things, Magic realm, Oppression, Save The President, Titan, TV Wars, Ubi, Willow, 1839 and more! All in A1 mint condition or swap for **Energie Poker, Trade, Homas Tour, Mafioso**. Send SAE for complete list or tel 0407 720895.

WANTED: *Command* magazine issues 1,3,3. For sale: SPI, AH, TSR and other games and magazines. SAE for list to R Sandell, 2 Darell Rd, Richmond, Surrey.

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OPPONENTS WANTED. Looking for computer or board wargamers in the North London and Essex area. S M Switzer, 24 Empress Parade, Chingford E4 8SL.

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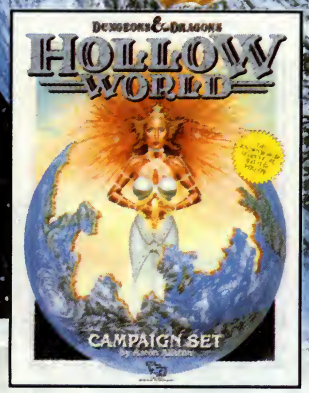

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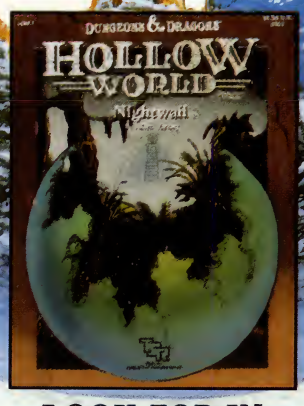

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